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Clearing the Path for First-Generation College Students: Qualitative and Intersectional Studies of Educational Mobility

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Clearing the Path for First-Generation College Students

Qualitative and Intersectional Studies of Educational Mobility

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Introduction

Clearing the Path: Situating First-Generation Students' Experiences in Qualitative, Intersectional Scholarship

Ashley C. Rondini, Bedelia Nicola Richards,
and Nicolas P. Simon

An April 2015 *New York Times* article headlined “First Generation Students Unite” described the emergence of a “first generation student movement” at and across college and university campuses throughout the United States. This piece is one of many stories from news sources all across the country—including *The Washington Post*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Chicago Daily Herald*—that have reported on the challenges, experiences, and successes of first-generation college students in the past several years. The term “first-generation college student” has been most typically used to describe young people of traditional college age from families wherein neither parent has completed a baccalaureate degree (Carnevale and Fry 2000; Pascarella and Terenzini 1998; Terenzini et al. 1996), although—as is demonstrated by the chapters that follow—there is variation regarding how scholars and institutions may operationalize the concept. Increasing media attention to this population reflects its rapid growth in the past several decades. Honing in on the specific profiles of several first-generation college students at elite universities, the *Times* article (and accompanying video, in the online version) detailed a coalition of first-generation college students working with “1vyG,” a thriving multicampus organization that hosted its fourth annual conference focused on “empowering and supporting” first-generation Ivy League students, in 2018. Its goals, and other similarly themed initiatives by and for first-generation students at a wide variety of academic institutions, include an emphasis on building community and elevating the collective visibility of shared “first-gen” identities.

Perhaps not surprisingly, first-generation college students themselves have been at the forefront of efforts to organize and mobilize around their shared status and experiences within institutions of higher education. These

students conceptualize their activism as part of what IvyG's organizers refer to as a growing "movement, not a moment"—which is a perspective that the institutions that serve them are now compelled to share. Integral to the resulting student-led organizations and initiatives is an asset-based framing of first-generation students' journeys that acknowledges obstacles while celebrating individual and collective perseverance. In different phases of their development and in different institutional contexts, first-generation student communities and organizations may be variably focused on support and resources for first-generation students and/or education and advocacy about and for first-generation student issues for the wider campus community. As the Facebook page for Cornell University's student-run First Generation Student Union (FGSU) reminds its members, they are "First, but not alone." The Working Class Student Union (WCSU) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison describes its purpose as "to advocate and provide resources for Working Class and First-Generation college students at UW–Madison while educating the entire university population on the benefits of recognizing and celebrating class diversity," based on the belief that working-class students "share a unique identity that has traditionally been silenced," and the desire to "break that silence and the stigma that it has created so that we can advocate for ourselves and the issues that are deeply impacting us" (WCSU, 2017). The emergence of these efforts is not limited to the campuses of Ivy League or large research universities. At Franklin and Marshall College, the fledgling First Generation Diplomats group focuses on support and advocacy, while pledging to approach first-gen student status through an intersectional lens that will encompass, as the FGD's website puts it, first-gen "students from diverse backgrounds, recognizing a need to respect individual differences of students from all races, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities, and abilities."¹ The group's founding coincided with the efforts of faculty and staff members at the college to establish a "First Gen Student Allies" organization, support for which is visually symbolized through "First Gen Student Ally" stickers displayed on faculty and staff members' office doors across the campus. The institutionalization of efforts to support first-gen students—whether led by students; by faculty, staff, and administration; or by both—manifests in a variety of other ways as well.

Community colleges serve the vast majority of matriculated first-generation college students. Yet, due to the imbalance of funding and infrastructural support opportunities for faculty research across different institutional contexts, the majority of recent scholarship focused on first-generation student experiences—including that which comprises this volume—has been conducted by scholars at four-year, disproportionately private colleges and universities, and thus is more likely to focus on the experiences of first-generation students at

these types of institutions. Although first-generation students comprise a dramatically smaller proportion of the student body at four-year institutions than they do at community colleges, both public and private four-year colleges and universities of all sizes have developed, or are in the process of developing, a range of mechanisms to address the specific needs and experiences of this growing population in their midst.

At all schools awarded competitive, federally funded TRiO Student Support Services Program grants, resources are explicitly devoted to academic and social supports for first-generation college students, low-income college students, and/or college students with disabilities. A steadily increasing number of schools are also adding complementary programs, events, and organizations centered on first-generation students' experiences and identities. On the small private campus of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, the student-led First Generation Student Union organization is supported by the overtly titled "Office of Multicultural and First Generation Student Services." Every spring at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, as end-of-semester due dates approach and final exams loom, the Student Support Services Program (SSSP) organizes a celebration of first-generation students, faculty, and staff entitled "I am the First," which is funded by the Office of Academic Services and a grant from the Brandeis Pluralism Alliance out of the Dean of Arts and Sciences Office. Attended by one hundred or more members of the campus community, the dinner event includes an introduction by the university's president noting the accomplishments of first-generation students, as well as student testimonials that describe their social and academic obstacles and triumphs with poignant candor and pride. At Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, the First To Go Scholars program includes a four-day summer retreat, a single-unit seminar course on the first-generation college student experience, and a year-long structured program focused on connecting first-generation students with resources, tools, and strategies for success in college. Institutions such as Endicott College Boston (a satellite campus of the original Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts) and Empire State College (a division of the SUNY system, with thirty-four campuses throughout the state and extensive online course options) are specifically focused on serving student populations that are first-generation and/or of nontraditional age as they work to attain their academic and professional goals. Off campus, the last two decades have seen a proliferation of local and national nonprofit organizations focused on increasing college access and college success for first-generation students, in addition to the older "tried and true" programs such as Upward Bound. Since its founding in 2004, Class Action, a national nonprofit organization, has offered support and resources to first-generation college students to "ease their transition to

college” while also collaborating with college and university administrations to identify gaps in services for first-gen students. The organization has hosted the First Generation Student Summit since 2012, wherein “First gen students and their allies come together to identify problems, discuss grassroots solutions and share what’s working on other campuses.”²

While most Americans perceive education as the “great equalizer” in attaining upward mobility, research points to enduring economic, social, and cultural barriers encountered by first-generation college students (see, e.g., Wilbur and Roscigno 2016; Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Aries 2008; Mullen 2010; Stich 2012; Stuber 2011). The paths forged by first-generation students in pursuing their aspirations are often obstructed in both obvious and subtle ways. Our goal in this book is to provide tools with which to more clearly understand the various forms that the obstacles on those paths may take, while at the same time illuminating the myriad strategies that trailblazing first-generation students employ as they encounter them, as well as the practices undertaken to support these students by the institutions that serve them.

Although academic engagement with and reflection on issues of educational mobility and identity have a much longer history, our contribution to the pursuit of these understandings comes at a sociohistorical moment when scholarship on first-generation status within the sociology of higher education has more recently come to the fore. Contemporary scholarship on first-generation college students has its intellectual roots in the “working class academic” literature that emerged during the 1980s—a genre primarily comprising compelling, retrospective, first-person accounts of individuals who had been the first in their families to get a college degree and had chosen to enter academia as a profession (see, e.g., Adair and Dahlberg 2003; Dews and Law 1995; Grimes and Morris 1997; Muzzati and Samarco 2006; Oldfield and Johnson 2008; Rodriguez 1982; Ryan and Sackrey 1984; Shepard, McMillan, and Tate 1998; Tokarczyk and Fay 1993; Welsch 2005; Zandy 1990). This literature contributed valuable insights into first-generation college students’ experiences and the social processes that accompanied upward mobility for individual scholars.

An abundance of quantitative academic and policy-focused work has significantly contributed to our understandings of the issues facing first-generation college students, illustrating economic (Lundberg et al. 2007; Lyons 2004; Pascarella et al. 2004), academic (McCarron and Inkelas 2006), and experiential (Allan, Garriott, and Keene 2016) inequalities between these students and their counterparts with college-educated parents. The National Center for Education Statistics (Chen and Carroll 2005) analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study to reveal that in comparison to their peers, first-generation students (a) declared majors later; (b) did not ac-

cumulate as many academic credits in the first year; (c) were more likely to require remedial courses; (d) were less likely to take courses in mathematics, science, computer science, social science, humanities, history, and foreign languages; (e) had lower GPAs; and (f) were more likely to withdraw from or repeat courses. Not surprisingly, as each of these individual indicators is associated with higher risks of attrition, the report demonstrates that first-generation college students persistently experience higher rates of attrition than their peers, and are subsequently less likely to complete their degrees. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education has pointed to similar indices of differentiation between low-income first-generation students and their more privileged peers, citing disparate persistence and degree attainment rates after students have matriculated (Engle and Tinto 2008) while also spotlighting the importance of comprehensive precollege services and programs in facilitating college access for first-generation students (Engle, Bermeo, and O'Brien 2006).

More recent research has demonstrated the persistence of these trends, while also highlighting the extent to which first-generation status itself conveys various forms of disadvantage, even when other factors are accounted for. First-generation status has long been understood to be negatively associated with a variety of academic performance measures, such as GPA (Strayhorn 2006), even as it intersects with other kinds of social identity statuses and risk factors for academic difficulty. For example, while all students with disabilities are at higher risk than students without disabilities for poor academic performance, first-generation college students with disabilities demonstrate lower levels of academic performance than do their continuing-generation peers with disabilities (see Lombardi, Murray, and Gerdes 2012). While students of color, immigrant students, and students from low socioeconomic status (SES) families are overrepresented among first-generation college students, first-generation status itself acts as a predictor of higher attrition risk when other demographic factors are controlled for (see, e.g., Ishitani 2003, 2006; Wilbur and Roscigno 2016). Wilbur and Roscigno (2016) found that first-generation students, on average, enroll in four-year colleges at rates of 70 percent less than their continuing-generation college student peers. Further, first-generation students who enroll in four-year colleges are 60 percent less likely to complete their college degrees than are their peers with college-educated parents (Wilbur and Roscigno 2016, 9).

Importantly, when first-generation status is disentangled from low socioeconomic status (with which it is significantly correlated), “college-specific disadvantages” and family stressors, “while certainly related to more general SES disadvantage, also have a unique and independent first-generation character” (Wilbur and Roscigno 2016, 8). Although students who are both

of low socioeconomic status *and* first-generation status are “surely at the greatest system of disadvantage,” Wilbur and Roscigno found that the “first-generation disadvantage” was not alleviated when they controlled for SES in their study (see Wilbur and Roscigno 2016, 9). When compared to their continuing-generation college student peers across racial and socioeconomic lines, first-generation college students were “less likely to be involved in [the] extracurricular and high impact activities” that would normally be positively associated with retention, and more likely to experience circumstances that are negatively associated with college completion such as working longer hours, residing at home during college, and personal and family-related events that are stressful (Wilbur and Roscigno 2016, 9).

This volume focuses on qualitative works, even as we recognize the critically important work that quantitative researchers have contributed to charting the “lay of the land.” Our aim here is to build upon the valuable contributions that can help to tell us *which* variables matter and *to what extent*—to explore *why* and *how* the variables identified in quantitative works matter in the meaning-making processes that inform first-generation students’ experiences, taking into account the unique social locations of individuals and groups. The crucial work of quantifying these differential risks and outcomes lays the groundwork for qualitative investigation of the mechanisms and social processes that undergird and perpetuate educational inequities and for documentation of the strategies and tools with which first-generation students confront the challenges that they encounter. The meaning-making processes through which selected variables are experienced may otherwise be difficult to extrapolate from numbers alone. Collectively, the chapters herein enhance the depth and nuance of understandings drawn from quantitative data. Centering first-generation students’ voices, these studies provide “insider” perspectives presented within the contexts through which students encounter their experiences of educational mobility.

We contend that qualitative analyses can illuminate the strategies and tools developed by first-generation students, their parents, or the institutional actors who occupy decision-making positions related to programs and services serving first-gen students. For example, longitudinal research on children of parents with low educational attainment levels has demonstrated that the educational expectations of parents act as a significant predictor of college attendance for first-generation students (see Bui and Rush 2016). When they do matriculate, survey data demonstrate that first-generation students are less likely to confide in parents, family members, and professionals about the stresses of college life than are their continuing-generation peers (see Barry et al. 2009), even when their difficulties intensify as time goes on. However, these findings cannot tell us *how* parents convey educational expectations

and/or *how* their children received and interpreted the messages about educational expectations with which they were presented, nor can they illuminate the ways in which students navigate their communication with parents (or others) regarding their college experiences, in light of the limits of what they disclose. To return to the understanding that the communication of academic expectations is an important aspect of parental support in predicting future enrollment in higher education for first-generation students, the qualitative literature illustrates the interactive processes through which these expectations are communicated.

At the same time, qualitative scholars have also documented the conflicts that students experience in attempting to navigate the institutional environments of their college or university campuses when the cultural capital of their families and communities of origin differs from that which is valued or required in their new institutional environments (Lee and Kramer 2013; Lehmann 2013). A number of relatively recent works have contributed to deeper understanding of the ways in which students navigate the experiential core of college life at the intersections of their social identities. Jenny Stuber's *Inside the College Gates: How Class and Culture Matter in Higher Education* (2011), Amy Stich's *Access to Inequality: Reconsidering Class, Knowledge, and Capital in Higher Education* (2012) and Elizabeth Lee's *Class and Campus Life* (2016) have illuminated the ways that inequities in socioeconomic class and cultural capital differentiate first-generation students' outlooks toward, and experiences of, the academic, social, and extracurricular aspects of their campus experiences from those of their peers. In another example, Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) collected data for their influential book, *Paying for the Party*, in a residential women's dormitory, placing the classed experiences of female students at the center of their analyses. Nonetheless, much of the literature on first-generation students systematically neglects to engage the relevance of gender, gender identity, or sexuality as meaningfully relevant to lived experiences of first-generation student status.

Our collection of studies engages the experiences of first-generation college students at the intersections of race, gender, citizenship/immigration dynamics, and socioeconomic status, drawing from and building upon the nuanced dynamics underscored through the qualitative empirical work of the past decades' scholarship. The first-generation student population is in no way a monolith, despite the shared experience of navigating academic environments without the benefits yielded by parental educational experience from which to draw. Race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, and citizenship status unavoidably constitute meaningful dimensions of social difference that inform educational outcomes as well as overall opportunities for social mobility. As in the study of any dimension of social inequality, it

is crucial to engage intersectional approaches to the study of first-generation students' experience because individuals occupy multiple identities and social locations simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989). Elizabeth Aries's (2008, 2012) work provides an example of intersecting race and class dynamics as they pertain to lower- and middle-class Black *and* lower- and middle-class White undergraduates at an elite liberal arts college, including those that are first-generation students. First-generation students face distinctive challenges, even as their shared first-gen status intersects with other aspects of their social identities and educational backgrounds in particular ways. The benefit of engaging nuanced, intersectional analyses of student experiences is demonstrated by Anthony Jack's (2014) work on the "privileged poor" and the "doubly disadvantaged," wherein differences in secondary institutional experiences mediated significant disparities in relevant cultural capital for college success among low-income Black students, despite their shared racial, socioeconomic, and first-generation student identities. Collectively, research on low-income White students (Lehmann 2013; Stuber 2011), Black students (Jack 2016; Owens et al. 2010) and Latinx students (Saunders and Serna 2004) allows for comparisons across groups of differing racial, ethnic, and immigration statuses. Nonetheless, there is comparatively less scholarship in the first-gen literature that meaningfully engages racial and ethnic identity dynamics for students of Asian and Native American descent or the significance of immigration and citizenship status in simultaneous relation to first-gen student status.

For example, although Native American student enrollment in higher education has increased by more than 200 percent since the 1970s—the majority of which comprises first-generation students (Brayboy et al. 2012)—existing scholarship on race, culture, and first-generation students pays scarce attention to the experiential factors bearing on the higher education experiences and retention of this population. Further, examinations of the impact of the legacy of settler colonialism on Native youths' racial identity formation experiences within predominantly White institutional environments in the United States—and higher educational institutions particularly—remains largely disconnected from the literature on educational mobility (see, e.g., Horse 2012). In addition, much of the sociological literature on Asian Americans is located within the immigration literature in part because Asians are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States (Lee and Zhou 2015), and the majority of Asian American children have immigrant parents (Passel 2011). Accordingly, this literature tends to focus on issues of assimilation and cultural adaptation. Immigration scholars are more likely to engage with debates about the role of Asian Americans in reshaping the color line, noting evidence of Asian Americans' growing acceptance into predominantly White

spaces (Alba and Nee 2003; Lee and Bean 2010). It is rare for immigration scholars who focus on Asian American students to highlight how their status as immigrants intersects with their status as first-generation college students. Although there is an abundance of studies in the sociology of education literature that seeks to critically engage the construction of Asian Americans as “model minorities” (Lee 2015; Lee and Zhou 2015), this trope continues to shape popular discourse about this population (Breitenstein 2013; Kristof 2015). The model minority narratives of Asian American success and acceptance are not compatible with the narratives of struggle, marginality, and resilience that characterize both the literature on first-generation students as well as the literature about racial and ethnic minority college student experiences more generally. Yet, dominant constructions of Asian America that are consistent with the model minority stereotype obscure the experiences of students from less advantaged Asian American ethnic groups (Lee 2015). For example, while almost 50 percent of Asian Americans have a bachelor’s degree or higher (higher than the US average), as of 2011 this was true for only 16 percent of Cambodians, 14.8 percent of Hmong, and 13.2 percent of Laotians (SERAC 2011). For Asian, Latinx, and other immigrant groups, immigration status may complicate how we as scholars in the United States tend to define first-generation status as a function of educational attainment. First-generation college student status among Asian American students is rarely addressed in immigration or education scholarship, and immigration and citizenship status are rarely central issues in studies of first-generation college students.

This edited collection builds on the momentum of earlier qualitative literature by placing first-generation status at the center of inquiry, while at the same time engaging intersectional analyses of the heterogeneity within that population. *Clearing the Path* comprises a range of peer-reviewed studies that explore social processes and meanings germane to the experiences of first-generation college students with timely, empirical examinations of the ways that first-generation college students negotiate dynamics and dilemmas of structural inequities, identity transformation, social and cultural capital, ongoing relationships with families or communities of origin, and the pursuit of community and belonging that characterize their educational mobility trajectories. Our hope is that these studies will serve to engage existing questions in the field of first-generation student scholarship in meaningful ways, while at the same time raising new critical questions for further examination in the future.

The navigation of identity dynamics for first-generation students is a complex process, to which several of these chapters speak directly. Allison Hurst’s *The Burden of Academic Success: Managing Working Class Identities*

in *College* (2010), from which her chapter in this book is excerpted, provides a framework through which to conceptualize the various identity management strategies—that of class “loyalists,” “renegades,” or “double agents”—that working-class first-generation students adopt in confronting these inequities. Another chapter, Lee and Kramer’s “Out With the Old, In With the New? Habitus and Social Mobility at Selective Colleges” (2013), has quickly become a landmark text in the scholarship on first-generation students, examining the ways in which first-generation students are incentivized to develop a “cleft habitus” as they navigate the social distance between their home and school environment. Rondini’s chapter in this volume, “Cautionary Tales: Low-Income First-Generation College Students, Educational Mobility, and Familial Meaning-Making Processes,” further explores these issues within the family context, drawing on qualitative interviews with first-generation students and their parents to examine one mechanism through which parental encouragement and educational expectations are conveyed, understood, and applied to the formation of social meanings attached to intergenerational educational mobility.

How might differing institutional contexts and processes inform differentiated first-generation student experiences at the college level? In a key study of one particularly successful program’s efficacy in supporting the success of underrepresented first-generation students of color in the sciences, Godsoe’s chapter, “Science Posse: The Importance of the Cohort in Normalizing Academic Challenge,” examines the significance of the cohort structure for students in the STEM Posse program, with particular attention to the role that this program plays in normalizing experiences of academic challenges or difficulties that might otherwise make individual students feel isolated. In another examination of institutional dynamics and practices, “First-Generation Students and Their Families: Examining Institutional Responsibility During College Access and Transition,” Kiyama, Harper, and Ramos turn an analytic lens to the ways that colleges and universities inclusively engage (or dismissively fail to engage) the parents of first-generation students before and during the critical college transition process.

Of course, institutional dynamics matter in ways that shape educational outcomes long before students even arrive to campus. In his early work, Jack (2014) found that even among Black students who originate from the same neighborhoods and inhabit the same social class positions, those who attended elite boarding schools gained cultural capital that contributed to a more positive and successful college experience. In Jack and Irwin’s chapter in this volume, “Seeking Out Support: Looking Beyond Socioeconomic Status to Explain Academic Engagement Strategies at an Elite College,” the researchers examine the ways in which these dynamics differentially inform

students' strategies for seeking out institutional support during their college careers. If secondary school context alone can contribute to such meaningful differences within a population that appears so homogeneous on the surface, what does that mean for differences across racial and ethnic groups whose histories of marginalization and relationship to the dominant group differ in meaningful ways? In Beard's chapter, "Toward a Local Student Success Model: Latino First-Generation College Student Persistence," the author critically engages this question as it pertains to Latinx first-generation students at predominantly White institutions. Beard's work pays particular attention to the ways in which these students "capitalize on community cultural wealth," among other resources and strategies, in ways that bolster their educational persistence. For other first-generation student-of-color populations, how do the particular socioenvironmental dynamics of predominantly White college campuses shape experiences of belonging—and pose challenges to thriving? For example, there are few scholarly studies that engage the intergenerational effects of settler colonialism that may uniquely inform Native students' negotiation of familial, cultural, and institutional identities as they undertake their college experiences (Reyes 2014). In their contribution to this volume, "Demystifying Influences on Persistence for Native American First-Generation College Students," Youngbull and Minthorn engage, in nuanced and groundbreaking ways, the multidimensional dynamics that particularly shape Native first-generation students' experiences and obstacles to educational attainment. In addition, the authors provide an inventory of programs and models that they identify as best practices for the support of Native first-generation students.

Given that immigration as a sociohistorical process has been critical to how racial and ethnic groups have been incorporated into the United States, how does immigration as a process at the macro level intersect with citizenship status at the individual level to influence what it means to be a first-generation college student? Because international degrees are devalued in the US economic market (Buenavista 2010) and cultural capital is context specific, some children of immigrants with college-educated parents may nonetheless experience challenges similar to those of their peers whose parents do not have advanced degrees (Chou and Feagin 2015), despite the ways in which their parents' contextual educational attainment experiences may benefit them in other ways (Feliciano and Lenuza 2017). This transnational intergenerational dynamic is one of several explored in Piñeros Shields's chapter in this volume, "Rethinking First-Generation College Status among Undocumented Immigrant Students," wherein he examines how premigration parental educational attainment level informs the college-access and college-going experiences of undocumented Latinx immigrant students at the

intersections of class, race, and citizenship. Relatedly, as Yeung points out, English language proficiency may limit even college-educated immigrants' ability to cultivate and transfer valuable forms of cultural capital useful in the US context. In her chapter on interdependent relationships and family responsibilities for low-income Asian American students who are also second-generation immigrants, she examines the multidimensional ways in which family immigration history shapes students' experiences of higher education in the United States.

Given the extant literature on the ways that gender influences the educational experiences of students (Dumais 2002; Lopez 2003; Morris 2011; Ostrove 2003), to what extent does gender—either as an ideological construct or a feature of one's identity—intersect with first-generation status and socioeconomic class to shape students' experiences? Ann Mullen's *Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education* (2010), from which her chapter in this volume, "Choosing Majors, Choosing Careers: How Gender and Class Shape Students' Selection of Fields," is drawn, brings intersecting gender and socioeconomic class dynamics into critical focus in ways that bear significant implications for our understanding of first-generation students' experiences and trajectories.

The body of work presented here is designed to function as a tool for dialogue between first-gen student communities, scholars, practitioners, and administrators who have the power to enact meaningful change in institutions that serve first-generation college students. This volume balances a focus on the challenges that first-generation students encounter in making successful transitions with an attention to the assets that contribute to their resilience, as well as potential policy and programmatic approaches to bolster first-generation students' likelihood of success. These chapters bridge a conversational gap between the production of scholarly research germane to experiences of first-generation college students and the implementation of evidence-based practices aimed at effectively supporting the success of this population.

Even so, we offer this collection of works as only a starting point that bears its own limitations. As noted earlier, the scholarship herein disproportionately examines the experiences of first-generation students at predominantly private, four-year institutions, reflecting the comparatively scant body of first-generation student research conducted within the community college systems that serve this population in far greater numbers. While it is our hope that this volume will provide fertile ground for the continuing cultivation of sociologically informed understandings of first-generation students' experiences, we also recognize that there are far more dimensions of identity beyond those explored herein—disability, religion, sexuality, and gender identity/expression, to name a few—that intersect with first-generation status in addition to

those informed by race, gender, class, citizenship, and immigration dynamics. There are, as always, more unanswered questions to explore. There is, as always, more critical work to be done.

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NOTES

1. <https://www.fandm.edu/campus-life/clubs/first-generation-diplomats>
2. <http://www.classism.org/programs/resources-generation-college-students/>