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First-generation college students' family role transitions in college: a psychoeducational support group

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FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS' FAMILY ROLE TRANSITIONS IN

COLLEGE: A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

A clinical dissertation presented in partial satisfaction

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Doctor of Psychology

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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To current and future first-generation college students:
You are a force to be reckoned with. Don't stop dreaming.

VITA

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ABSTRACT

The college student population continues to grow diverse in many ways, including the evolving cohorts of first-generation college students (FGCS). These students, whose student generational status is defined by having parents who have not enrolled in post-secondary education, enter college with a different background than their peers who have parents familiar with the college experience. This difference accounts for some challenges regularly faced by FGCS, including sensed tension within their family system and overall distress as they transition from their home-oriented to school-oriented roles. This student population lacks resources that aid understanding and management of new challenges within the family and coping with family-related stress. This dissertation project builds on empirical, theoretical, and applied literature about FGCS and their family, literature about the psychoeducational support group format, and original content to offer college mental health clinicians to facilitate a psychoeducational support group for FGCS on their campus. The recommendations outlined in the group handbook included in this dissertation provide college counseling center group facilitators a guide for helping familiarize FGCS members with changes that might occur in their family during the transition to college. This includes guidance on how to manage family-related stress that might arise, including preparation on how to convey expected role transitions to family members and negotiate changing roles. Additional considerations for using recommendations, project limitations, and directions for future research are also addressed.

Keywords: first-generation college student, family, role transitions, psychoeducational group, support group, university counseling

Chapter 1: Introduction

The attainment of higher education is a benchmark many students in the United States aim to reach. Often, academic success in college or university heightens opportunities for occupational success. For example, a strong relationship exists between education and earnings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), with college graduates earning over 84% more in income than high school graduates (Day & Newburger, 2002). The college student population continues to grow in their demographic diversity, including cohorts of first-generation college students (FGCS). These students are defined by the U.S. Department of Education (1997) as students "whose parents never enrolled in post-secondary education" (pp. 120-121). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) estimated that 34% of undergraduate students were the first in their families to go to college in the 2011-12 academic year. An additional 28% of undergraduate students had parents with at least some college experience but not a bachelor's degree.

While attaining college acceptance and deciding on a school to attend are significant steps in education, not all students begin on this path and enter college in the same fashion. For FGCS, entering college is a major achievement highlighted by the fact that they are the first in their immediate family to have made it to this pivotal point in their academic careers. Although these students are moving ahead, several factors have the potential to negatively impact their academic and occupational success, including some factors related to how they navigate family conflict and change. As college students transition from their familial role and grow into their developing student role, they often face unique stressors related to family issues (e.g., balancing time to devote to family and school). They experience a role transition, which is any adaptation to a new set of circumstances (Weissman, Markowitz, & Klerman, 2008). As the FGCS

population continues to grow, universities and educational programs have created resources to help these students and their families. Often, these resources detail career interests, financial aid, navigating campus environments, balancing a social life, and involving parents in the transition (Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2006). What is lacking for FGCS are adequate resources for understanding and coping with the newly expected challenges within the family and managing family-related stress.

More specifically, while an abundance of general resources is available for FGCS, limited efforts have been made to help FGCS cope with the unique stressors related to family issues that might arise as FGCS begin and continue to navigate through their college careers. Numerous studies have determined that the FGCS population generally lacks the support and preparation for the transition to college that their peers with college-educated parents typically possess (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004); however, little research has focused on how to discuss this with FGCS and prepare them for different aspects of the college transition. Additionally, research identifies that FGCS' struggles extend beyond the typical stressors experienced by other students and that they also experience stress related to social and cultural transitions. These changes may lead to emotional distress and potential mental health issues (Jenkins, Belanger, Connally, Boals, & Duron, 2013). Thus, FGCS may face a greater number and diversity of stressors than many non-FGCS, or students whose parents enrolled in post-secondary education.

The purpose of this dissertation project is to develop a group-oriented resource directed towards FGCS managing family-related stressors and transitions. It will focus on issues specifically related to family-based matters. The project will contribute to developing an understanding of how to prepare these students for various expected role changes and how this

may impact their family relationships. Literature relevant to the need for such a resource will be synthesized in the following literature review, and the plan for the resource will be outlined in the Method section. First, a snapshot of the broader issues and challenges that have been found to characterize the FGCS population will be presented.

Overview of First-Generation College Students

To understand the magnitude that familial influences might have on the experiences of FGCS in college, it is vital to explore background factors that helped shape the lives of these students and their families. Research has shown a positive relationship between parental education and academic achievement of students at the post-secondary level, and parental education remains the most foundational factor affecting the intergenerational transmission of education in families (Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2004). Knighton and Mirza (2002) emphasized the role parental education has in creating access to post-secondary education for their children. They maintain that parents who have attained more education often pass down beliefs and skills to their children that are encouraging of academic achievement. As they grow involved in their children's education by gaining familiarity with the school and the post-secondary process, these parents increase their expectations for their children's academic success. Further, parents' values of education can be passed on as they continue to foster environments that encourage attainment of higher education.

FGCS are likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with less preparation toward college and minimal access to information regarding college expectations (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016; Thayer, 2000). Approximately 30% of FGCS are from families with an annual income less than $25,000 (Pryor et al., 2006). The majority of FGCS surveyed by the U.S. Department of Education (2005) are female students. In addition, FGCS are more likely

to be ethnic minority students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Wang and Castañeda-Sound (2008) emphasize the importance of considering both generational status and racial/ethnic status variables when studying FGCS' well-being. The National Center for Education Statistics 2010 report (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) noted the following breakdown of total students from each represented demographic who are the first in their family to enroll in college: 48.5% of Hispanic or Latin American students, 45% of black or African American students, 35.6% of American Indian students, 32.2% of Asian students and 28% of white students. Ethnic minority students, including FGCS, are not all from economically disadvantaged families; however, they have been historically underrepresented in colleges and the empirical literature on college students. This underrepresentation has been linked to limited attention to students' needs, and therefore to underutilization by these students of campus resources often associated with academic success. For example, Herndon and Hirt's (2004) study on black students' success in college suggested that the general resources available to students on campus might be insufficient in assisting ethnic minority individuals to succeed in college due to factors such as these students' distrust and stigma around assistance from authorities.

Clark (1984) found that "regardless of socio-economic status, the degree to which family structures support learning and education significantly affects achievement" (p. 3). Still, the financial barriers that are often paired with lower levels of formal parental education can also diminish students' educational opportunities and success. Due to these foundational barriers, FGCS tend to begin higher education with distinct and significant disadvantages. These impediments have been linked to outcomes such as students dropping out of college, taking longer to complete their degree, and attaining employment in a field below their potential (Redmond, 2006). Compared to students with parents who possessed post-secondary education,

FGCS are more likely to enter college without a classified major, maintain a lower grade point average, and take a remedial course in their first year of college (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Overall, these students often have difficulty making connections between their program requirements and how to achieve the career goals with which they might enter college (Vargas, 2004).

Research on the academic and social contexts of FGCS has shown that students can find college environments intimidating (Thomas & Quinn, 2007). Further, they are often hesitant to seek help from advisors, faculty members, or other support staff (Kim & Sax, 2009). Many of these students live off-campus and may remain in their family home to save money. Commuting long distances between home, classes, and full-time or part-time jobs adds to the time many FGCS have to spend away from their schoolwork (Higher Education Research Institute, 2007). Due to this time away from campus, FGCS may miss important opportunities to participate in activities unrelated to class, such as with campus clubs and organizations. Without this campus involvement, many FGCS may experience a diminished sense of belonging in their college (Garcia, 2010). When their engagement with their college may be solely or primarily through formal academic commitments, FGCS' low level of social integration denies them the various "transformative" experiences that are more typically gained through extracurricular activities on college campuses (Redmond, 2006, p. 128). Thus, FGCS may face many challenges during their time in college. These can be classified into three categories: academic, professional, and mental health.

Academic outcomes. With regard to the first of these, studies show that FGCS tend to not complete college degrees in a timely manner and have lower college retention rates in contrast to traditional students (Ishitani, 2006). Further, they are twice as likely as non-FGCS to

leave before their second year of college at four-year institutions (Choy, 2001). Even with initial goals in mind to maintain high grades and earn a bachelor's degree, these students reach these goals at lower rates (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), which has been linked to less preparation for higher education by their parents (Choy, 2001) and students' diminished confidence in their ability to succeed in school (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). As alluded to earlier, compared to traditional college students, FGCS participate less in campus-based extracurricular activities (Folger, Carter, & Chase, 2004) as well as in many academic-enrichment experiences. For example, FGCS complete fewer credit hours, take fewer humanities and fine arts courses, work more hours than study each week, are less likely to participate in honors programs, and make smaller first-year gains in reading comprehension than their traditional peers (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

Professional outcomes. The challenges that FGCS face academically can have a ripple effect and extend into their professional outcomes. Statistics show that post-graduation plans for FGCS and non-FGCS are similar: nearly 23% planned to continue their education, 17% indicate a desire to take time off or uncertainty of their plans, and 60% plan to directly enter the workforce. However, a more significant difference between these two groups of students is the use of family in the job search process (55% FGCS versus more than 66% non-FGCS; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016). This lowered rate of post-graduation family involvement may be related to the lack of a professional network that FGCS often face, a resource that students often believe is important for success beyond graduation. Indeed, FGCS also need to work harder than non-FGCS peers to make professional connections; if such connections are lacking, career exploration is more difficult (Tate et al., 2015). Further, thinking

about gaining employment in industries that FGCS' parents were not traditionally part of may provide these students with uncertain paths for the future (Tieken, 2016).

Mental health outcomes. An understudied aspect of the experiences of FGCS is their mental health. FGCS pose unique counseling needs related to the adjustment to college life, family issues, and academic functioning (Lippincott & German, 2007). In addition, some research indicates they endorse more severe perceived stress, less effective social support, higher levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increased rates of depression symptoms, and less life satisfaction compared to their traditional college peers (Jenkins et al., 2013). They likely have fewer individuals in their social network who can understand and relate to their college experience, and reduced opportunities to disclose stressful life events that may then have a negative impact on academic success, physical health, and stress levels (Barry, Hudley, Kelly, & Cho, 2009). Although FGCS are likely to be a group with a heightened need to utilize counseling services, FGCS appear to underutilize counseling services on their college campus (Stebleton, Soria, & Huesman, 2014).

Family Support

Next, a review of the literature focused on familial influences and related challenges will be outlined to highlight the topics of family support, college knowledge, obligations, the student's changing role, and boundaries. Overall, research suggests that FGCS face a lower perceived level of family support, lower parental emphasis regarding the importance of college, and less parental knowledge of the college environment (McConnell, 2000). Parents' lack of college-related experience might provide challenges in talking with their children about college expectations and norms even if they want to be involved. While knowledge on these issues (i.e., *college knowledge*) might be lacking in some families, often parents still hold and demonstrate

tremendous pride regarding their child's achievement of attending college (Borrero, 2011). Still, if FCGS perceive limited parental or familial support for the decision to go to college, it can be particularly difficult for them to manage continued obligations to the family unit. Assisting FGCS in recognizing these changing aspects of their role within academia and their family will be crucial before supporting them in conveying these messages to their family.

College can be a stressful and overwhelming transition for any student and their family to navigate. Family relationships are among the types of relationships that shift during the developmental period of emerging adulthood, when most students enter college (Arnett, 2000). New college students are faced with the task of separation and individuation as they begin to spend less time with their family, whether or not they remain living at home (Johnson, Gans, Kerr, & LaValle, 2010). This transition sometimes leads to distress, such as increased family conflict, for students wanting to balance family connection and personal independence. These challenges may be magnified for FGCS, who often experience additional pressures to maintain their roles and responsibilities within their family. For the FGCS, the transition to college can result in higher levels of perceived stress if frequent and intense conflict for an extended duration exists in their family (Lopez, 1991).

The sustained resource of effective family support can go a long way in helping students, as well as their loved ones, feel prepared for the milestones and stressors of a typical college experience. Family support for FGCS is crucial, as it has been shown to greatly influence the overall transition to college including academic and social integration, retention and desire to complete school, and persistence throughout the college experience (Wang, 2012). In addition to providing advice on how to manage specific college situations and challenges, Wang (2012)

suggested that family support can come in the form of general advice, encouragement, and emotional support.

As with other college students, for the FGCS population, the typical college experience is punctuated by the ongoing experiences these students have with their families. While many college students' families may view college as a rite of passage, for students who are the first in their families to attend college, it also importantly signifies a major separation from and change within the family. The association between this change and parental support has been the subject of research, and the concern that FGCS might not receive adequate support from their family has been continually raised in such research. McConnell's (2000) review on how to assist FGCS emphasized that these students perceive their parents to be less supportive of their decision to attend college as well as less encouraging than did non-FGCS. Further, Hsiao (1992) raised caution that the parents, siblings, and friends of FGCS who have limited experience with college might also interfere with students' adjustment to college. The interference can come in the form of criticism for devoting time to school over family or for taking on various aspects of college culture, such as dress and vocabulary. As individuals close to FGCS take note of these changes, students often sense tension and an uncomfortable separation from the culture in which they grew up. London (1992) suggests that these tensions often require FGCS to renegotiate relationships with family members and friends, a task not easily accomplished. The motivation to enroll in college for FGCS includes a thoughtful effort to improve occupational, economic, and social standing (Ayala & Striplen, 2002). Any discouragement, even unintentional, from going to college can sometimes lead to students distancing themselves from relatives and friends who are perceived to be discouraging of these goals. Striplin's (1999) college transfer guide for FGCS suggested that these students are disposed to doubting their motivation and academic abilities,

and ultimately might decide they are not prepared for college. Again, any additional perceived discouragement from others may heighten such feelings.

While this review of the literature is not focused on specific racial or ethnic populations, it is crucial to note that families' racial and ethnic identities and norms may have a significant influence on some aspects of FGCS' psychosocial functioning. Wang and Castañeda-Sound (2008) examined college students' psychological well-being and found that ethnic minority student participants, including some FGCS, tended to feel less satisfied with life, reported lower self-esteem and lower levels of academic self-efficacy, experienced more stress, and perceived less support from family members and friends than their White peers. Further, the findings of the study suggest that receiving higher levels of family support helps to decrease FGCS' level of stress, and receiving lower levels of family support leads to an increase in stress level. The authors hypothesized that FGCS might be self-conscious about their "pioneer" role as the first in their family to attend college, possibly increasing their susceptibility to the influence of perceived family support. Considering that the FGCS population is comprised mainly of individuals of ethnic minority backgrounds, (U.S Department of Education, 2005), it is vital to consider the racial and ethnic status, as well as college generational status, of these students to better understand how these factors may relate to perceived support.

Surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Education over time have demonstrated that more than nine out of 10 Hispanic parents expect their children to attend college (Schmidt, 2003). These statistics are similar to results of family surveys conducted with black and white parents; however, Hispanic children are less likely than white children to have a parent who attended college. Schmidt also suggested that one of five (20%) white freshmen in college are the first in their family to attend college, while the statistics on Hispanic freshmen show that

more than two of five (40%) of these students are the first in their family to attend college. A study on Hispanic students' persistence toward graduation (Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, & Aguilar, 2011) found that familial encouragement played a key role in this process. On the other hand, some students discussed the pressure of trying to balance their family work and academic obligations, particularly when unpredictable crises like family emergencies arose. Without other resources, such as readily available access to university or community help, these students may be discouraged from continuing college and may experience adverse emotional and mental health outcomes.

College Knowledge

Parental involvement in a child's education has been shown to greatly influence the desire to attend and enroll in college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Perna, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2005); however, FGCS often lack available assistance that parents who have prior college experience can provide. Parental social support, particularly in the transition to college, can also reduce negative academic and mental health outcomes for all students (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). The likelihood of this outcome is lowered for FCGS who may not be able to rely on their parents' knowledge of academic and social expectations that could facilitate their children's socialization to the college environment (Pascarella et al., 2004). FGCS' parents might lack the social and cultural capital that regularly aids a student's understanding of higher education culture. Bills (2000) described cultural capital as the "degree of ease and familiarity that one has with the 'dominant' culture of a society" (p. 90), in this case referring to dominant college culture. Pascarella et al. (2004) described social capital as a form of capital in relationships that facilitates the transmission of various resources. This limited guidance and social and cultural capital may translate to students' perceived lack of support from their parents, which adds to the

stress they must manage during the college application process and when attending college (York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). All students, regardless of college generational status, will need to be prepared with the knowledge of the pathways in education that will lead to their desired occupational goals, as well as how their academic performance might influence outcomes related to these goals. Vargas (2004) noted that while students in low-income schools endorse high aspirations for their education and career, they often lack the practical knowledge needed for planning for these goals. While these aspirations can keep FGCS motivated, it can be difficult to progress toward achieving concrete goals when even foundational information is lacking, including information regarding costly admissions procedures such as paying for multiple college applications. Students of minority, lower-income, and first-generational college status are particularly likely to lack specific college knowledge (Vargas, 2004). This knowledge base would include information on preparing for higher education such as how to complete admissions procedures, finance the cost of education, and connect career goals with academic requirements.

Additionally, this college knowledge can be conveyed by parents as advice and emotional support that would assist students when they face new challenges concerning college. Interacting with parents and others who have had some experience of college when planning for and beginning college has been shown to be beneficial for most students. Through these interactions, students can build their awareness and understanding of the guidelines, practices, and culture of college (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). In a study by Palbusa and Gauvain (2017) on communication between FGCS and non-FGCS and their parents, no difference was found between how frequently each set of students spoke with their parents about college. However, non-FGCS found these conversations with their parents to be more beneficial, as well as of

higher quality, which was linked to a higher grade point average in the first year of college than for non-FGCS.

While many differences exist between FGCS and non-FGCS during their pre-college time period, there are three areas relevant to college knowledge and expectations set by parents and schools. The first difference is that prospective FGCS typically face the application process without sufficient assistance from their parents due to a lack of knowledge about the overall process (Choy, 2001). Second, Noeth and Wimberly (2002) suggested that unless secondary schools address the expectations for college, FGCS, particularly Hispanic and African American students, are at a disadvantage. Lastly, the issue of insufficient academic preparation is an issue in that parents who did not attend college are not likely to convey the importance of taking challenging courses and entrance exams (Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001). Without the experience of earning a college degree, it is difficult for some parents to communicate the value of higher education to their children and to confidently guide them to appropriate resources (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Additionally, research indicates that some parents face barriers when seeking this information, such as limited familiarity with college resources and limited English proficiency. For families who are immigrants and/or of low-income status, these issues can be amplified and lead to greater difficulties meeting FGCS' needs (Baum & Flores, 2011).

Despite the limited college information that parents of FGCS often have to provide, FGCS often report benefiting from their parents' emotional support as they prepare for college (Nichols & Islas, 2016) especially if they were encouraged by their parents to attend college (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). This emphasizes the vital role that parents play, regardless of their college knowledge, in their children's transition to college. Palbusa and

Guavain (2017) call for further study on ways that parents without college experience can assist their children who are planning to attend college. Overall, the authors recommend that parents support their children in succeeding in college regardless of whether the parents attended college. They suggest that these future students will benefit from understanding the importance of communication with their parents about the college process, and they emphasize the value of programs that provide this support and knowledge.

Continued Obligations

Among the unique challenges faced in college, FGCS often come across a lack of familial support and preparation, differing expectations, and conflicting obligations (Hsiao, 1992; Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016). Additionally, studies have illustrated the struggles experienced by FGCS in managing conflicting values and loyalties related to the home, family, and peers (London, 1989). The literature suggests these challenges may be somewhat unique to FGCS and they have been studied in relation to FGCS' perceived support and psychological well-being (Brooks-Terry, 1988). These experiences may lead FGCS to feel as if they bounce between two cultures (Hsiao, 1992). FGCS will often describe sensing an underlying expectation that they are to remain connected with and contribute to their family during college (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Tseng, 2004).

One of the most distinct challenges faced by FGCS in the transition from high school to college is the abrupt increase in responsibilities. An important theme identified in the interviews for Sánchez, Esparza, Colón, and Davis's (2010) research was that students now had multiple responsibilities to juggle during this transition and beyond. Increasing responsibilities from school and work, added to expectations regarding family obligations and financial circumstances, greatly impacted this transition. In considering where and when to tend to

academic needs such as homework, FGCS often have a difficult time creating a designated time and space to work at home and may be criticized for dedicating time to school rather than family duties (Hsiao, 1992). Many students may believe they have little choice in working to contribute money to their immediate and extended family, particularly if they are the only male in the family. Some FGCS are also expected by their family to be responsible for financing their education. The family responsibilities that remain after beginning college can include a range of tasks from physical household chores, to child rearing, to providing emotional support to family members.

The transition from high school to college can be disruptive for any student and their family. The challenges in transition are pronounced for students who held multiple responsibilities in the home before beginning college. A strong sense of family responsibility and obligation is often associated with collectivistic family orientations, including many families with Asian, Latin American, and other ethnic minority backgrounds (Fuligni et al., 1999). The familial tradition often remains significant for adolescents from these families who enter a period, such as starting college, when American society typically calls for increased autonomy. Rather, cultures with a collectivistic orientation emphasize the interest of the group or the family over the individual (Triandis, 1995). Many Asian and Latin American families, in particular, aim to socialize their children to assist in family duties, such as cooking meals and taking care of family members (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991). In addition, daily events, such as meals, and special occasions, such as holiday gatherings, are highly valued (Mordkowitz & Ginsburg, 1987). Furthermore, parents' immigration status can influence the degree to which traditional family principals are emphasized, as youths with foreign-born parents are more often asked of, and value, these traditions.

While some Asian and Latin American young adults may cite family values as part of their ethnic and cultural identity development (Gaines et al., 1997), living among American society and individualistic values can create personal and family conflict. In fact, familial duties are often cited to be one of the most significant sources of conflict between children and their parents within Asian and Latin American families (Zhou, 1997). Youth's attitudes toward their family obligations can also relate to their gender, socioeconomic status, and family structure (Witkow, Huynh, & Fuligni, 2015). For example, due to the prevalence of gender-based household duties, females may give more attention than males to assisting their families (Goodnow, 1988). With regard to family structure, those with lower-incomes or with single parents might require their children to increase their duties in aiding the family.

A substantial body of research suggests that Latino individuals and their family uphold strong family obligation attitudes (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Fuligni et al., 1999; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Sánchez et al.'s (2010) study examined the role of familial decisions in low-income urban Latino students during their transition from high school. Family and economic context played a role in these participants' decision to attend college and/or work after high school. They discussed family obligation attitudes as a major theme in their decisions on pursuits and responsibilities they assumed during the transition. Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) described family obligation attitudes as "the extent to which family members feel a sense of duty to assist one another and to take into account the needs and wishes of the family when making decisions" (p. 856). Sánchez et al.'s (2010) study participants stated that their family obligation attitudes included considering and often prioritizing family's needs, spending time with family, and being a positive role model to other members of the family. Some familial attitudes, including placing importance on the needs of the immediate and extended family before one's own, might make it

difficult for young Latino students to defer adult responsibilities (Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Leyva's (2011) study examined the tensions that Latina FGCS face while navigating their ethnic/cultural and professional identities. Various facets of these identities, including expectations of gender role in the home, parents, family, and academia, were found to be challenging to manage even when parental support for the pursuit of education existed. The Latina students in this study often described their mothers as reinforcing expectations around family roles. All participants of this study expressed dissatisfaction with their family roles, and many actively challenged their mother's expectations. Rather than focusing on the goal of independence, which is common among many college students, some individuals of particular ethnic groups and lower socioeconomic status might need to shift their focus to fulfilling family obligations. For Latino FGCS in particular, family obligation attitudes and demands strongly influence how these students navigate the choices faced in emerging adulthood (Sánchez et al., 2010).

A major theme explored by the participants in the study of Latina FGCS by Leyva (2011) was that of serving others, particularly fathers and husbands. Latina FGCS participants discussed the firm expectation placed on them to defer to males in the family. Participants noted how serving others was believed by their community to be a measure of women's intrinsic worth, and they discussed how failure to meet these expectations led to feelings of shame within the family. Related to the theme of serving others, participants cited obligation attitudes around submission and anticipating the needs of others. For Latinas, in particular, Leyva describes submission as tied to a set of behaviors that can result in the negation of identity. Participants explained that their attempt to integrate their developing professional identity with strong attitudes and values around family was challenging as FGCS. They emphasized the stress resulting from the constant

negotiation of these two realms, which likely negatively impacts the efforts made towards each responsibility. With such high importance placed on meeting obligations to others, it can be immensely difficult for FGCS, particularly women, to prioritize or even schedule the time to attend to their education. If other roles and responsibilities take over those related to the family, Leyva suggests this could lead to FGCS' negative thoughts and perceptions about how the family's status is viewed within their community.

As an illustration of culturally-bound obligations, a study on this transition for Latino emerging adults identified family obligation attitudes as a central theme surrounding decisions about life and responsibilities after high school (Sánchez et al., 2010). The participants noted this transition was a stressful period, marked by familial and financial responsibilities that were added to school and work responsibilities. These components contribute to a student's acculturation process in a new environment as their generational and ethnic minority statuses can be apparent on a campus with predominantly non-FGCS and non-Latinx students. Latinx students, and Latina students in particular, often face pressures of balancing institutional values for their education and home values for their family, such as by caring for younger siblings and household duties (Sy & Romero, 2008). Gloria and Castellanos (2012) also noted an intentional need for negotiating a balance between home and school. Latina FGCS participants in their study discussed the need to balance family and school, and found it difficult to do this when they were expected to maintain consistent contact with their family members through daily phone calls or visiting home every weekend. The pressure to maintain this agenda by these FGCS was fueled by believing themselves to serve as role models for siblings or cousins. Many of these students value *familismo,* or family characteristics of closeness and loyalty (Vega, 1990). In contrast to values of independence emphasized on college campuses across the United States, these

students' values might propel them to prioritize family responsibilities that challenge the notion of putting school first. Family is a "source of pride and strength" (MacDonald & Carrillo, 2009, p. 22) for many members of the Latinx community and has been found to support students as they transition between their home and other cultures.

While the emerging adulthood period described by Arnett (2007) that takes place between 18 and 25 years of age emphasizes identity exploration and focus on the self, among other characterizations, these experiences might be more common for individuals with more economic resources (Arnett, 2000). The economic advantage would allow emerging adults to explore personal opportunities as they defer adult roles and responsibilities. For FGCS in this age range who also are part of an ethnic minority, immigrant, and/or low-income populations, it might be more difficult to defer adult responsibilities that would allow time for self-exploration. Rather than a time of role exploration, FGCS often face this transition as a time of role uncertainty.

In Arnett's (2003) study with emerging adults of various ethnic groups, notable differences between different groups were found that likely reflected cultural attitudes toward the family. More specifically, Arnett's results demonstrated that ethnic minority participants were more likely than White participants to identify role transitions and independence as necessary criteria for the transition to adulthood. The role transitions identified in the study included completing education, becoming employed full-time, and settling into a long-term career. Additionally, the majority of study participants agreed that independence in transition to adulthood is achieved when establishing an equal relationship with parents, deciding on values and beliefs independently of parents, and living outside of parents' household. The study found that ethnic minority participants often were of lower socioeconomic status compared to White

participants and that this combination of cultural and economic factors led to an emphasis on family obligations in emerging adulthood being a more challenging period to navigates for non-White participants. The range of factors influencing the transition to adulthood and independence, from completing education to moving out of the family household, was vast and left limited opportunity for these students to commit to familial obligations previously held.

Overall, it appears that students from families who uphold strong family obligation attitudes and who are also of low socioeconomic status are more likely to take on multiple responsibilities including those of school, work, and the home. It is important to note that attempting to balance these different roles is not invariably associated with negative consequences. For example, having deeply embedded attitudes regarding an obligation to the family can be a protective factor. Students who are motivated to pursue higher education can be perceived as good role models for their family members and contributing members who can eventually provide financially for their family. Furthermore, gaining experience in assisting family can have beneficial effects on emerging adulthood development and can highlight the value of responsibility and care (Goodnow, 1988). For example, emerging adults are more easily socialized to prioritization of various college course assignments when they have experience prioritizing household tasks. Further, many students, particularly from immigrant families, achieve success in college because of the obligation they feel toward their families for moving to the United States for better opportunities (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Nevertheless, with increased conflict between school, work, and home demands, this balancing of obligations creates additional stress that can ultimately impact students' academic progress, relationships, and mental well-being. The various increasing financial, familial, and educational

responsibilities placed on FGCS may also limit opportunities to explore their identity and various paths for their education and career.

Student's Changing Role

When beginning college, many FGCS will find that they have limited availability to tend to their home, school, and social life because of the demands associated with their new role as a college student. In addition to duties to the home and family, students entering college will have to balance a full course load, satisfactory grades, extracurricular activities, a new social network, and professional development (Pascarella et al., 2004). While this transition can be challenging to navigate for any student entering college, some FGCS express difficulty explaining the complexities of their new role to their parents and other family members. Family members with limited familiarity with the college experience and its associated expectations may experience challenges in accepting or adapting to the student's new and changing roles. For the family, questions and worries might arise about the completion of daily duties and general dependability of the student as it relates to family obligations.

Bryan and Simmons (2009) noted that some FGCS describe the role transition to college like "leaving one culture and moving to another" (p. 393). Many students are faced with the dilemma of keeping home and cultural traditions and balancing this with the motivation to leave their home communities for educational and occupational pursuits. Parents, in turn, may feel that their child's pursuit of these new opportunities will result in alienation from their cultural roots (London, 1992). Students who come from families with more collectivistic values, such as group harmony and closeness to others, might find themselves prioritizing family matters over school. Students from families with individualistic values, such as achievement and self-direction, might experience a more smooth transition in tending to increasing demands in their personal academic

careers. While students leave home to attend college elsewhere for a variety of reasons, many FGCS still express a desire to remain a part of their family. However, this desire might be tainted by the sacrifices and compromises often made to adapt to and succeed in college (Tinto, 1993). Still, some students will assimilate only in specific situations, and find it manageable to drift between their home and college cultures (Dees, 2006).

According to the FGCS participants of Gibbons, Rhinehart, and Hardin's (2016) study, college adjustment involved learning about oneself, academic expectations, balance, and self-care. FGCS noted wanting to observe self-growth, such as in gaining independence and developing their personal and professional identities. For some students, this was a particularly important undertaking as they were adjusting to the responsibility of having to take care of all daily matters on their own for the first time without the help of family. Necessary academic adjustments that study participants mentioned were meeting deadlines, managing expectations of professors, and managing a level of academic rigor not usually present in high school. For many student participants in this study, academic adjustments were significant because of the marked difference experienced between their high school and college classrooms, including a different relationship with instructors, and varied levels of effort toward coursework. The pursuit of balance noted by participants was often related to a sense of feeling torn between focusing on school and visiting family at home. For example, FGCS in this study described a desire to stay connected to their family for support while also wanting to reduce distractions to school, such as spending time traveling home. FGCS described self-care to be important in their adjustment to college. They discussed self-care habits such as good sleep hygiene, physical health maintenance, and effective money management. Many students in the study also described

prioritization of health and other responsibilities as crucial when caring for themselves and not having family members consistently checking in on them.

Often, college students find themselves having to dedicate more time than they did in high school to studying or seeking assistance with coursework, leading to compromised time with family. FGCS in Gibbons et al. (2016) study reported that they did not feel prepared for the shift from high school academics to the coursework required at the college level. The shift in academic effort can significantly impact relationships between FGCS and their parents. For example, the extra time students take to complete homework, study, or engage in other academic expectations, such as group work among peers, can be perceived by parents as time taken away from family responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities held while in high school vary for every student, and some possibilities range from watching over younger or older family members to working jobs to provide income for the family. As FGCS' roles shift from predominately familial to academic ones, misunderstanding and clashes might occur within the family. Students' understanding and preparation around expectations for change in their family system could present opportunities for productive conversations and conflict moderation with family members.

Boundaries

Establishing and maintaining boundaries support the mission of educating FGCS on expectations during the transition to college. Boundaries help clarify a sense of self, as well as define and distinguish between different kinds of relationships. Interpersonal boundaries exist between two or more individuals, such as between parents and their children (Rosenberger, 2011). Families' boundaries vary by the "degree of permeability" and how open or closed they are (White & Klein, 2008, p. 158). Communication patterns between parents and their children

tend to remain the same during the student's transition from high school to college. This pattern might be interrupted or changed by the student's natural tendencies toward a form of separation-individuation or identify formation occurring in this developmental stage. Parental preservation of older patterns of communication may contribute to difficulties in setting and maintaining boundaries (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004; Rosenberger, 2011).

Education for both FGCS and their parents about what to expect when the student begins college, including setting boundaries, is important as the experience of the student attending college will be novel for the whole family. Terenzini et al. (1994) explained that for FGCS, "going to college constituted a major disjunction in their life course… they were breaking, not continuing a family tradition" (p. 63). Due to the significant implications of this change in family life, it is vital for students to first understand, and then convey to their parents, what they can all expect. The knowledge gained and disseminated can include information on the student's course work, extracurricular involvement, social networking, and engagement in professional opportunities. Because some of these responsibilities were not present or as demanding before college, new college-related demands might come as a surprise for both students and their family. Still, family and household duties will likely remain active and require maintenance from students between high school and college.

Yet, establishing such boundaries with family may be challenging and come at some cost. Difficulty in or inability to meet family obligations has been studied to have negative impacts on FGCS' sense of well-being (Vasquez-Salgado, Greenfield, & Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015). In particular, the research findings suggest that conflict between school and family demands contributes to students' negative perceptions of their psychological and physical well-being. The potential for conflict in home versus school values, including conflict with individualistic college

demands and collectivistic family demands, can increase during college. Orbe (2008) theorizes that FGCS attempt to establish separate family and school identities to manage conflicting goals. While awareness and flexibility in navigating different social situations is a necessary skill to develop, setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries is also a skill relevant in emerging adulthood. As FGCS develop an understanding of college life expectations, they can reflect on the types of boundaries appropriate to set with their family members. Similar to the continued process of adjusting to college life, boundaries and norms might also shift as demands and availability change.

A study on acculturation and well-being among first-generation and second-generation immigrant college students (Schwartz et al., 2013) suggested that individualistic values appear to be linked with the psychological and eudemonic well-being of these college student populations. Additionally, the study found that attachments to a cultural group, including the United States, one's country of origin, or both, appear to promote these areas of well-being. Although the authors note the influence of variables such as family, finances, and other contextual factors, the authors stress the agency of students to navigate their education. Autonomy, the notion of self-governance and making responsible decisions, is an important developmental goal for college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Steinberg, 2008)

Further, Schwartz et al. (2013) noted the sense of empowerment and liberation students could feel when taking responsibility for this journey. The authors also validated the difficulties in initiating and maintaining efforts to establish and adjust to adult roles, which require a degree of individualism, especially when considering competing commitments such as those related to family. Since some families might discourage individualized decision making, the authors of this study suggest including these family members in decisions regarding college and the transition to

adulthood. They call for clinicians and counselors to help find a balance between developing skills necessary for making individualized decisions while also respecting and considering students' cultural heritage. When a clash exists between these two values, clinical professionals and interventions could help resolve this incongruity.

Support Groups

With the understanding that FGCS would benefit from knowledge on what to expect as they transition to college and how to explain these changes and new needs to their family, relevant resources for this task will need to be considered. Lippincott and German (2007) suggest group counseling as a useful way to aid FGCS in addressing psychosocial factors relevant to family and school conflicts. Since family support serves an important role in protecting well-being, Wang and Castañeda-Sound (2008) propose outreach programs in colleges to promote understanding and familiarity within the family about college demands. Such college programs would aim toward the goal of increasing family support for FGCS, whether or not family members could directly be a part of formal counseling or other college programming. Aside from conversations on balancing home and school life, various other relevant topics such as family values and history of education are suggested topics that could shed light on underlying variables contributing to a potential conflict between FGCS and their family members.

College counseling centers are equipped with professionals and training to address issues of adjustment, transitions, and identity formation in students of all backgrounds, including FGCS. Structured groups in these settings can support students in many ways such as imparting information, providing a place where common experiences are shared, offering support, helping members problem solve, and providing a space where members can acquire skills and rehearse them (Furr & Barret, 2000). Utilization of a psychoeducational group format is common among

college counseling centers (Parcover, Dunton, Gehlert, & Mitchell, 2006). This format is recommended by Parcover et al. (2006) to promote personal and interpersonal growth within the college student population for a wide range of issues including those of identity and relationships. Often, such groups contain a theme, specific goals, and include psychoeducation and related activities. A meta-analytic review of the effectiveness of social support group interventions for psychosocial outcomes (Brunelli, Murphy, & Athanasou, 2016) emphasized the contribution of sharing and exchanging experiences and emotional support. The psychoeducational group approach attempts to create and maintain an environment in which members can experience commonality and a sense of belonging, as well as learn by developing new skills and observing and listening to others (Harris, Altekruse, & Engels, 2003). Furthermore, psychoeducational groups allow time and space for information to be learned as well as shared in a supportive manner.

A psychoeducational group for FGCS on their college campus could provide these students with a place of support to address the family-related concerns previously reviewed. The need for interventions that encourage FGCS to share similar experiences with other FGCS is supported by researchers, clinicians, and FGCS alike (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015; Hsiao, 1992). With this opportunity, FGCS can learn information likely not communicated by parents, as well as receive and relate to the peer support they often lack in academic institutions. Further, exercises weaved into sessions can help personalize the information learned and integrate concepts into members' cognitive framework (Furr & Barret, 2000). Communicating early on the expectation of safety and confidentiality, as well as of other therapy norms, can allow members to feel free from the judgment of family members and other outside members they may often

have difficulty addressing. Although members might not initially know one another, the groups on a college campus can provide a sense of community support beyond the group.

Dissertation Rationale and Aims

The literature on academic, professional, and mental health outcomes of FGCS suggests poorer outcomes compared to non-FGCS (Jenkins et al., 2013; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016; Terenzini et al., 1996). Thus, as the FGCS population grows across campuses, the concern to meet their varying needs has also increased (Thayer, 2000). Yet, the programs and resources often provided to this population typically come in the form of academic advising, career development, and financial aid (Darling & Smith, 2007; Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2006; Vargas, 2004). Furthermore, while some programming encourages parents to get involved in their children's education, this can appear to be a daunting task for parents who have little familiarity with the academic and social culture of colleges. Whether or not parents participate in this type of college programming, adequate resources regarding the family are still lacking.

Furthermore, although the literature on FGCS often makes some reference to familial influences and relationships (e.g., how perceived lack of family support is correlated with poorer outcomes for FGCS, the dilemma of balancing new academic roles/responsibilities with family-based roles/responsibilities), more limited literature exists about FGCS' role transition from high school to college within the family context. Similarly, while much of the literature and related resources on FGCS focus on college admissions and academic success, there is little information available on resources for FGCS to assist in their role transition as it pertains to family-related issues and conflicts.

As this review of the literature has demonstrated, several concerns have been raised about the need to address the role transition for FGCS and how this may impact family relationships. While FGCS and their parents can access information regarding the procedures and logistics surrounding college academics and finances, the current literature demonstrates a gap in providing critical information to students about managing challenges and stress within the family as it related to the college student's transition to the college setting.

Furthermore, students' connection to and involvement with their school community is a significant factor in the transition to college life (Folger et al., 2004). The transition is a crucial and continued process in the retention and success of FGCS who are more likely to have better outcomes when they work to develop their student identity and role. Identity development will often include setting appropriate boundaries with family members to attend to academic responsibilities and new opportunities. Cultural norms are to be carefully considered here, as values of family and identity can greatly influence how separation from the family and integration into the school community are viewed.

The gap in resources for FGCS to address family-related issues that may be challenging to navigate can be addressed, in part, by the creation a psychoeducational support group model on this topic. The development of such a group would make a unique contribution to the literature because, to this investigator's knowledge, no literature exists on specific recommendations for a psychoeducational or support group for FGCS that is focused on helping these students with transition issues involving family relationships. The group model would provide recommendations for facilitating information dissemination and allow a forum for FGCS to share their experiences on an impactful and often stressful topic. Development of a group model in a handbook format has the additional potential to reach a wide audience at a minimal

cost and could reduce discrepancies in the quality of services provided across various schools. Accessibility of this resource will further benefit college counseling centers that are often faced with limited resources including time, clinician availability, and finances. Lastly, the psychoeducational support group for FGCS aims to advocate for a growing, yet often underrepresented population of students who, in the transformative college years, can benefit greatly from personalized support and guidance.

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to implement or evaluate the resource, specific recommendations informed by the literature in the form of studied interventions and original content will be outlined. As recommendations in the form of a group resource are missing from the literature, this project may provide a foundation for future implementation of programming and program evaluation.

Chapter 2: Method

The chief goal of this dissertation was to develop a psychoeducational support group model to be used by mental health professionals on college campuses for the purpose of addressing the issue of role transition for first-generation college students (FGCS). Specifically, the resource would help familiarize FGCS with changes to expect within their family, how to create an understanding of this transition in the family, and how to manage related family conflict. Thus, although FGCS face many potential challenges in their transition to college, as the preceding review has shown, changes in family relationships and expectations regarding family roles are areas that FGCS may particularly struggle with, and resources to address these changes appear limited. The objective of creating a psychoeducational group model addressing FGCS family-related issues was accomplished by initially reviewing and analyzing various relevant bodies of literature, including literature on FGCS, the transition to college and the associated impact on family relationships, and psychoeducational groups. With regard to the first of these areas, the literature on FGCS was broadly surveyed to understand the common experiences and challenges faced by this group. Particular emphasis was placed on collecting as much information as possible on the impact that the college transition has on family relationships for FGCS in areas such as continued family obligations, boundaries, and balancing attention to family relationships and the new role of college student. The literature on the transition to college and the impact on family relationships more generally (i.e., not restricted to FGCS) was explored to determine how findings in this area (e.g., regarding challenges faced, possible ways to address such challenges, etc.) might be adapted for FGCS. Finally, the literature on psychoeducational support groups implemented in college settings was examined to determine if best practice parameters exist for the formation of such groups. This literature was synthesized

and assessed for areas of further study with the aim of producing specific recommendations for implementing a psychoeducational support group for FGCS. This chapter is focused on outlining literature review strategies and the resource development methodologies that were employed in the dissertation project.

General Procedure

First, a comprehensive review of the existing literature on FGCS outcomes, as well as barriers and catalysts to successful role transition, provided necessary background and highlighted gaps in the literature on ways in which family relationships are impacted by FGCS' transition to college. The associated literature on the impact of the college transition has on families in general (not solely among FGCS) provided further information that may be relevant to FGCS. Comprehensive reviews of these bodies of literature intended to guide the development of a program to aid FGCS in understanding expected changes related to their academic and family responsibilities as they enter college.

The second phase of the dissertation included the development of recommendations for a psychoeducational support group that will outline the various topics to be discussed with students. The resource is presented in a handbook that can be distributed to mental health professionals on college campuses (e.g., university counseling center). The resource also outlines the rationale and goals for the group.

Literature Review and Analysis Procedures

Identification of source material and study selection. Various topics in the literature on conflicting demands for FGCS were reviewed in developing this resource. The literature on academic, professional, and mental health outcomes were reviewed to provide significant context to this project. A more extensive review of the literature on FGCS focused on effective family

knowledge of college culture, family support, students' continued obligations to the family, students' changing roles, and personal boundaries in this transition. As previously mentioned, additional exploration of how the college transition impacts family relationships in general was conducted to round out an understanding of issues of relevance to FGCS' family relationships. The literature review on counseling groups highlights opportunities available to provide students with customized resources of support. Similar recommendations previously proposed for college students in general were also reviewed to serve as a foundation from which to modify the program for students of first-generation status with family-related concerns.

Search strategies. The resource is informed by literature identified through the use of research databases such as PsycINFO and search engines such as Google Scholar. The investigator has sought literature that is qualitative, theoretical, experimental, and correlational in nature on the various topics previously mentioned. Emphasis was placed on articles from peer-reviewed journals related to college mental health, as well as first-generation college students and their families. In addition, the literature review included scholarly textbooks on relevant topics. Information published online by professional organizations, including colleges, advocating for college mental health and FGCS were considered for the latest recommendations in assisting students; such sources provided representative samples of what various universities and colleges are currently providing to FCGS. In this review, particular attention was given to recommendations relevant to providing FGCS with information and a space to share experiences with other FGCS.

To guide the literature, various combinations of the following keywords were used to search literature databases: first-generation college students, college students, college mental health, mental health, college counseling, counseling, group therapy, perceptions, clinicians,

psychoeducation, support, groups, recommendations, best practice, outcomes, barriers, family, family relationships, family support, college knowledge, education, roles, transition, developmental issues, and boundaries.

Development of resource/program content. Findings from the comprehensive literature review were evaluated to inform the resource. The group handbook includes specific recommendations for providing psychoeducation around college expectations, family support, and navigating changing roles and boundaries related to family and school demands. The resource was written in a handbook format that would allow for easy potential distribution to college campuses (e.g., university counseling centers). The resource includes sections on background information, the rationale for development of the group, and guidelines to follow for a five-session psychoeducational support group.

Chapter 3: Results

Overview

The primary goal of this dissertation was to recommend guidelines for a psychoeducational support group, titled *First in the Family*, that can be implemented by mental health professionals in a university setting to address role transitions of first-generation college students (FGCS). These recommendations can aid FGCS by guiding them through potential changes and conflicts within their family as they navigate college. As previously reviewed, this is a relatively underdeveloped area in an examination of available resources for FGCS. This chapter will review summary findings relevant to the research inquiry and study of how to approach these possible conflicts within this student population. An explanation about the process in creating group curriculum guidelines will be included in this chapter. A review of the literature on factors influencing role transitions for FGCS and how they impact family relationships was conducted. This review identified several factors contributing to and hypothesized to be influential in impacting these students' experience – namely: (a) college knowledge; (b) family and home obligations; (c) balancing home and school duties; (d) family support; and

(e) boundaries. Further description of these factors is provided in this chapter.

Students may encounter a variety of changes as they shift from high school to college. For FGCS, the duration and intensity of this transition may be amplified for a variety of reasons outlined throughout this review. These students often experience a shift from their family-oriented roles to their college-oriented roles and obligations as they become more immersed in their college experience. Of the various way FGCS may be impacted during this transition, one significant yet infrequently discussed tension is how the student's family dynamics might change. Currently, there are limited contributions in research literature and other Internet

resources that would help FGCS cope with familial stressors that might arise as they begin and continue their college experience. While resources and general support are offered in some contexts to help navigate other aspects of the FGCS experience, there currently exists no set of guidelines for FGCS or their families that acknowledges and makes recommendations for how to communicate about and mitigate potential familial tensions that could arise for FGCS. Although several studies have identified how the FGCS population tends to lack support and preparation for the transition to college (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), there is limited research on how to prepare these students for potential family-related changes. FGCS have been underrepresented not only on college campuses, but they have also been underrepresented in empirical literature on the college student population. The literature that currently exists on FGCS includes little information on familial influences and relationships, and very limited research focuses on FGCS' role transitions in the context of family as they shift from high school to college. The lack of these students' representation in the literature and on their college campuses has contributed to the barriers they face in utilizing appropriate campus resources, including mental health services.

One way the gap in resources for FGCS to explore family-related issues can be addressed is through a psychoeducational support group space. The creation of handbook guidelines that would direct this type of group would be a unique contribution to the existing literature and available resources. The group model includes recommendations for facilitating a space that would offer psychoeducation on family-related topics as well as space for students to share experiences in how they have dealt with and negotiated the changing roles within their families as they have transitioned to becoming college students. The written format of these guidelines expands the potential to reach a wide audience with little cost and barrier to providing similar

services across various college settings. As college counseling centers often encounter issues related to limited time, clinician availability, and finances, increasing accessibility of this resource will benefit stakeholders such as mental health professionals operating in college counseling centers. The creation of recommendations for a psychoeducation support group for FGCS aims to advocate for this underrepresented population of students who have demonstrated they can benefit from this support and guidance.

The curriculum of this group handbook of recommendations was based on a consideration of various elements. The process by which the guidelines were formed included researching the needs of FGCS, including emerging adulthood experiences and family tensions, as well as other related topics such as interpersonal effectiveness skills and coping strategies. The format of a psychoeducational support group was considered because it addressed the demonstrated need of building knowledge and skills as well as receiving support. Generally, structured groups can offer many benefits, including "imparting information, sharing common experiences, teaching people how to solve problems, offering support, and helping people learn how to create their own support systems outside of the group setting" (Corey, 1990, p. 11).

Originating from the work of Furr and Fulkerson (1982), this group was developed with two phases in mind. The first phase is the conceptual stage of identifying a statement of purpose, establishing goals, and setting objectives. The purpose of this group is to address the issue of role transitions for FGCS, which would include their adaptation to a new set of circumstances (Weissman et al., 2008). More specifically, the goals include providing familiarization with changes that might occur in FGCS' families during the transition to college, how to create an understanding of this transition within the family, and how to manage family-related stress that might arise. Objectives of this group include FGCS learning and feeling prepared to convey to

their family their expected transitions, as well as coping with family-related stress. Additionally, this group aims to establish a network of social and emotional support for FGCS.

The second phase is the operational stage that includes selection of content, and evaluation. Although evaluation of the group is not within the scope of this project, consideration of the process of evaluation will be noted in the Discussion chapter. This process of group development aligns with the aims of the group because it aids implementation of specific content that is rooted in researched needs of this population. Selection of content for the group considers critical psychoeducation that would be offered for students as well as guided material for facilitators on how to lead the group, including facilitating the process of providing and receiving support. Group topics, identified as relevant by the literature, will provide the basis from which to offer psychoeducation.

Psychoeducational interventions share numerous characteristics with workshop and preventative efforts, such as the efforts hypothesized to be made in this FGCS group. As Drum, Becker, and Hess (2011) noted, intervention strategies in psychoeducational groups are based are two goals: transmission of information surrounding making a change and delivery of a process on how to make that change. There is an observed relationship between education, instruction, and action in this type of group. The trajectory of this type of groups often starts with increasing awareness of the benefits of changing, to problem solving, to understanding how to apply concepts in future situations, and finally, goal setting and monitoring. These authors' description of psychoeducational groups review advantages of this class of interventions, including the structure and predetermined purpose of these groups allowing flexibility with the type of facilitator involved in the group. They emphasize that group leaders, or co-facilitators, should

have the ability to convey information in an effective manner, as well as readiness to help members problem-solve the application of delivered information.

Psychoeducational and curriculum groups rely on a prearranged sequence of topics to be covered during group sessions. These groups are often closed to new members due to the sequence in which session content builds. Additionally, they typically have a limited number of members to allow for sufficient discussion of the material. Since this group format focus tends to be on provision of information (Gitterman & Knight, 2016), the in-depth exploration of members' challenges and support exchange calls for a robust support component of the group.

Gitterman and Knight (2016) emphasize that the group experience relies on the mutual aid that is created as members interact. They emphasize the encouragement of members to learn from and support one another. Mutual aid has been characterized by Schwartz (1961) as the "need to use each other, to create not one but many helping relationships, is a vital ingredient of the group process and constituted a common need over and above the specific task for which the group was formed" (p. 158). Partnering with one another to address shared life concerns can be empowering and validating, as members discover that they are not alone in their experiences and feelings (Knight, 2014). Group members start to have a better understanding of their own lives in the process of getting to know others'. The exchange of support becomes a more strong and credible process when it is done between individuals in similar circumstances (Knight & Gitterman, 2014, p. 5). In groups that are driven by curriculum, members learn from leaders and from other members. The insights and suggestions of each member can resonate with others and feel credible, as members speak from personal experience. The insights attained from others about what has worked for them add on to what facilitators have presented. When guidance is provided by peers, it can offer reassurance of the possibility of change, as well as growing

feelings of self-efficacy and esteem. Above all, being with others who can relate to similar experiences fosters feelings of safety and genuine learning (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007).

In line with the American Group Psychotherapy Association's (AGPA's) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Group Psychotherapy (2007), this group would benefit from a pre-screening process. In the recruitment phase, potential members have an opportunity to learn more about the group and determine with the facilitators if they are a good fit for the group. Identification with being a FGCS, which would include many different definitions of the classification, and a desire to build knowledge and support around the transition from home to school-oriented roles are key criteria for joining this group. In the group, psychoeducation, activities, and space for peer support will be provided each week for the following topics: college knowledge, family and home obligations, balancing school and family, increasing family support, and boundaries. The structure instructs that there is one session per week, with one topic discussed each session, totaling five sessions over the course of five weeks. Other content to consider for recommendations include coping strategies related to managing tensions and conflicts that a student could potentially address. It is critical to provide specific recommendations on effective ways to facilitate a supportive environment within the group context for all members. This chapter will review how the content of the sessions was created.

As outlined in the group development guide by Alle-Corliss and Alle-Corliss (2009), the first session indicates the beginning of the group. The leader has ''many different dynamics and logistics to manage" (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2006, p. 85). During this *initial stage* (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007), group tasks include "determining the structure of the group, getting acquainted, and exploring the member expectations" (Corey, 2004, p. 90). This would include "starting the group, introducing the content to the members, and monitoring the members' reactions both to

being in the group and to the content'' (Jacobs et al., 2006, p. 85). Other considerations include

how to begin the group, clarifying the group purpose, explaining session structure and leader's

role, and promoting a positive tone overall.

Included in the introduction to group is reviewing group norms and guidelines. This

would include attendance, punctuality, and socialization between group sessions (Burlingame et

al., 2006). Among the most crucial of issues to discuss in the beginning of group is

confidentiality. It is important to detail limits of confidentiality, and to encourage confidentiality

in group and the protection of each member's anonymity (Salvendy, 1993). While group

members are not legally required to preserve confidentiality of information disclosed in the

group, an agreement should be reached by all members regarding the transmission and exchange

of information as well as identifying group members outside of the group. If leaders are

operating in an agency in with other providers or in collaboration with other the campus

departments, such as providers in the student health center, limits to confidentiality regarding

exchange of information in these confines should also be reviewed (Leszcz, 1998). Additionally,

the AGPA (2007) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Group Psychotherapy emphasizes the

importance of clearly conveying the structure and framework of the group. Information such as

location of the group, meeting time, duration of sessions, group size (generally seven to ten

members), and policies around absences are also recommended to be noted. While individual

facilitators and agencies would determine many of these details, the recommended duration of

sessions is ninety minutes each week for five weeks.

As noted in this chapter, striking a balance of group content and process is key. A useful

way to guide this balance is through setting an agenda to review with members at the start of

each session. Yalom (1985) stated that setting an agenda would assist members understanding

explicit goals. In the first group session, the agenda would include introductions of group leaders and group members, norms and guidelines, aims and purpose of the group, and plan for psychoeducation on selected topic and processing. Additionally, it would be explained that there would be ample time for group support exchange.

Of note is the importance of remembering and verbalizing that not all pieces of psychoeducation regarding the FGCS experience will resonate or be relevant to all FGCS. It is vital for group facilitators to acknowledge for themselves and with group members the multifaceted and varied experiences of FGCS. Discussions of family-related shifts are likely to be complex and might span other topics or concerns not planned for. Creating space for students to vocalize and explore other experiences, even incongruent to common research findings, is vital to the effort of honoring and validating the complete FGCS experience.

Additionally, the current contexts in which the group exists is important. Facilitators should take time to understand and reflect on current events, campus and community climate, and sociopolitical climate. Various societal and global events and attitudes observed outside of the campus can significantly impact the way students feel on their campus and in other spaces. Campus climate includes current attitudes and perceptions that define an institution and its members (Association for the Study of Higher Education-ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, 1999). Students of color, which includes a large minority of FGCS, have been studied to often perceive their campus environment as unwelcoming, which can contribute to a sense of powerlessness and isolation (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003). Campus racial climate, defined as students' perceptions of the racial and ethnic environment of their institution, influences the help-seeking attitudes of students of color (Gloria, Hird, & Navarro, 2001). Students may perceive university services in similar ways that they view their campus climate, and may be

unwilling or hesitant to seek out counseling services on campus. Therefore, it is crucial for universities, university college centers, and facilitators of this group to be aware of sociocultural and political issues that might impact all students, and in particular, FGCS and those with marginalized identities. This continuous reflection, in an effort to embrace and convey cultural humility, will help appropriately advocate for the unique needs of FGCS. Facilitators will be able to openly acknowledge various campus and community atmospheres or occurrences as they might be relevant to FGCS and their experiences in and out of the group. In this way, group members would be provided natural opportunities to reflect on their sense of safety, trust, and connection with the group and in other spaces they are engaged in.

Group Session Content

College knowledge (group session 1). The first topic introduced in the first group session is college knowledge. This group starts with a heavy emphasis on psychoeducation in the first session due to the requirement of reviewing group norms, including confidentiality. It is crucial to detail limits of confidentiality and to encourage confidentiality between members to protect each member's anonymity (Salvendy, 1993). Since group members are not legally required to preserve confidentiality of information disclosed in the group, all members should reach an agreement regarding the privacy of transmission and exchange of information, as well as identifying group members outside of the group. If group facilitators are working within an agency of other providers or are in collaboration with other providers in separate departments, such as a psychiatrist in the student health center, they should also review limits to confidentiality regarding this potential exchange of information. Additionally, disseminating basic knowledge about the influence of parental familiarity with college will set a solid foundation for group content and process. As the literature suggests, parental knowledge of the

college experience is a key distinguishing factor when comparing the FGCS and non-FGCS college experience (Pascarella et al., 2004). Therefore, providing psychoeducation on this topic was deemed to be an appropriate way to begin introducing this group during the first session. The first group session conveys how this knowledge base may impact students and their various choice points before and after the start of college. Since it is typical that parents of FGCS have less specific information to provide their children that would help them make decisions for their college experience, FGCS might have had trouble identifying which institutions were a decent fit for them (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, & Kelly, 2008). Lack of parental knowledge about college may, in turn, lead some students to feel doubtful about how they have been guided on their path to finding themselves at this particular institution, as well as the guidance they might continue to receive from parents or others. As decisions surrounding college might have been made without a great deal of guidance, it is possible that some FGCS in the group hold certain curiosities or beliefs about how they fit into their new environment. Students might feel doubtful, worried to trust, or overwhelmed by past experiences of limited guidance, as well as by anticipation of their journey ahead. Since students will have to continue to make choices throughout their academic career that might at times feel uninformed by family input, validation of potential feelings of overwhelm, doubt, and mistrust that might arise is important to emphasize continuously in the group (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). Additionally, facilitators can empower students to build trust in their own decision-making skills and know when and how to seek the guidance they might need.

Socialization to the college environment overall is often facilitated by parents passing on their knowledge and experience of academic and social expectations of college (Pascarella et al., 2004). Since most FGCS will lack that, students in the group will have the opportunity to help

familiarize their parents and themselves with academic and social expectations they can integrate

in their life. Additionally, the motivation to attend college is closely tied to occupational goals. If

parents are lacking knowledge on how to navigate the college experience, it is likely that the path

toward career goals is also impacted by uncertainty (Vargas, 2004). Empowering students to

seek other sources of support for academic and career success is crucial, and efforts should be

made in the group to link students to relevant on campus resources. Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon,

& Hawthorne (2013) suggest that FGCS' unique challenges need to be addressed by advising

interventions that will help familiarize students with educational requirements and available

resources to help them succeed. Additionally, the group can encourage linkage to campus

support programs specifically for FGCS, such as EOP/S (Educational Opportunity Program/and

Services) and TRIO, to help enhance connection and success. EOP is a provisional admission

and educational support program that aims to improve access to postsecondary education and

promote retention among historically underrepresented students. Students are eligible for this

competitive program if they can demonstrate their low-income status and potential for academic

success. Many EOP students identify as FGCS, Latix, and/or African-American (Winograd,

Verkuilen, Weingarten & Walker, 2018). The Federal TRIO Programs, known as TRIO, are

federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and serve first-generation

college students, individuals with low income, and individuals with disabilities to help assist

them in progression through their education. The Higher Education Act of 1965 intended to

strengthen colleges' educational resources and to provide college students financial assistance,

and opened opportunities for programming such as with TRIO. TRIO began with three

programs, hence the name, and has since expanded to eight programs to assist students from

middle school to post-baccalaureate programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). A study by

Wallace, Abel, and Ropers-Huilman (2000) found that participation in a support service program, such as ones in TRIO, helped students be better served, informed, and engaged. Information dissemination about campus-specific resources for FGCS would be particularly appropriate during this first group session. While it is likely that students have been made aware of campus resources and organizations, briefly summarizing available sources of support that have particular relevance to FGCS' concerns could benefit many of the members.

"College knowledge" can also be conveyed in the form of emotional support while students face college-related challenges. While parents would ideally be one source facilitating supportive discussions of their child's college-related challenges, others such as mental health professionals in the group, can interact with students to build awareness and understanding of the guidelines, practices, and culture of college (Kuh et al., 2005). Members of the group can be the best source of guidance as they have had the unique experience of being college students on that campus. Encouraging conversation around recommendations based on members' personal experiences is appropriate and a distinctive aspect of this group. Building a sense of hope in the group is a significant and continuing task, and facilitators can continue to encourage students to seek knowledge and support from various sources, including the group itself. Facilitating a discussion about expectations held for college by teachers and counselors at students' high school, parents, friends, and students themselves would set the foundation for the group. A unique aspect of this group is building knowledge and skills to inform FGCS' parents as well as FGCS themselves. In an effort to work toward this, facilitators can encourage members to begin by sharing with their parents their decision and rationale to join the group. Members may be provided suggestions about ways in which to communicate this information to parents, such as by indicating that they are becoming familiar with campus resources and seeking information

that would supplement their learning process in their regular courses. As the weeks progress in the group, further suggestions regarding what to communicate to parents will be provided.

The FGCS experience spans the range of receiving a potentially overwhelming amount of messages from family members to receiving no messages at all (Thayer, 2000). Coming together as a group with thoughts about messaged college-related expectations from self and others provides a natural opportunity for members to share how their experiences thus far have mapped onto the expectations they came into college with. Members can be encouraged to share experiences they have been surprised by and hopes and goals for the future. This initial topic would allow for support exchange in a non-intimidating manner during a group stage in which members are beginning to get to know about one another. It would be reasonable to give these topics ample time for discussion, as they also allow members the chance to build knowledge, trust, safety, and connection (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007). Building these important aspects of a group is a primary goal of this first session, as well as introducing the relevance of college knowledge and exploring its impacts on members.

Family and home obligations (group sessions 2 and 3). The second and third group sessions focus on family and home obligations. During these sessions, the psychoeducation is somewhat informed by members' sharing of experiences. The psychoeducation portion provides foundational knowledge about the unique challenges faced in college by FGCS, such as encountering a lack of familial support and preparation, varying expectations, and conflicting obligations (Hsiao, 1992; Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). Space is provided to explore the influence of members' and their family's values of school and family. Particular attention is placed on the family's culture and norms for responsibilities and expectations related to the home and for family members. With guiding questions, facilitators can help uncover expectations of

students' roles in the family as held by family members including parents, siblings, and extended family. Additionally, students are given the opportunity voice their experiences of maintaining obligations in the home before and after beginning college. While this discussion can create a sense of comparison between members' experiences, it also serves to highlight the similarities that will help build members relate and connect.

A significant shift for FGCS in the transition between their home and school roles is rooted in the obligations they have to maintain to the home and add for school. These changes may be understood within the context of a home-school value conflict. The second session may start with psychoeducation about this home-school value conflict, which is the conflict between family and academic obligations. The potential for home-school value conflict between individualistic behavioral college demands and collectivistic behavioral family demands could peak during college (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). This is when demands for individual academic achievement noticeably increase, while time spent with and for family becomes more difficult to schedule. While values do not always dictate obligations, these concepts in family systems have been known to be closely aligned and related (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). Family obligation values include children's attitudes toward assisting and respecting family members (Fuligni et al., 1999), and can influence the behaviors or obligations youth carry out. It is important to verbalize the complexities of and challenges related to familial obligations and expectations often experienced and received by FGCS, including managing conflicting values and loyalties related to the home, family, and peers (London, 1989).

Many of the challenges are rooted in cultural norms. Family members often view college as a temporary excursion while family relationships may be permanent and fundamental to FGCS' social life. Attention to challenging notions that FCGS' parents hold the same views and

assumptions as them provides helpful context in the group. During this session, information on values relevant to collectivistic and individualistic values can set the foundation for discussing and receiving support around any emotions or concerns that arise out of trying to balance changes and prioritization. As it relates to FGCS, individualistic values tend to highlight independence, looser family and social structures, and fewer expectations to care for the family. Collectivistic cultures tend to be interdependent, have closer family and social structures, and have more expectations to provide care for the family (Carducci, 2012). The values of some families, including immigrant Latino parents, are generally collectivistic (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013). This is in contrast to the organization of college, in which social relationships with non-family members are often transitory. These impermanent relationships allow students to focus on individualistic goals of personal achievement. Another factor influential of values is relative wealth, as greater economic resources are typically associated with individualism, and fewer economic resources are often coupled with collectivism (Park, Twenge, & Greenfield, 2014). FGCS are more likely to come from families of low socioeconomic status (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016), and therefore their collectivism becomes more significant.

While many immigrant parents strive to provide their FGCS children an opportunity to achieve formal education, they may also view family and academic achievement values as integrated. (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). Therefore, immigrant parents of FGCS may not realize the partial incompatibility between school and family values. The task of navigating between these two value systems is then in the hands of FGCS. As these students attempt to understand college norms while preserving home identities, they might encounter feelings of familial dissonance or culture shock (Jengahir, 2010). When providing this information to members, facilitation of discussion or personal reflection is encouraged. Members

can be asked to think about where they and their families lie within the home-school value conflict continuum. Connectedness to family, regardless of its complexities, is a protective factor and should be highlighted as such if important to members (MacDonald & Carrillo, 2009). FGCS participants of Gibbons et al. (2016) study described a desire to stay connected to their family for support while also wanting to reduce family-related distractions to school. A desire to remain connected with and contributing to their family during college is a common experience (Fuligni et al., 1999), and validation of the complex emotions surrounding home and family values and responsibilities is to be woven throughout this session. Of note, some family values are consonant with college-related values and goals, and this congruence can be of benefit and enhance mutual understanding.

The second group session is an opportunity for members to begin to explore the impact of family and home obligations. It can be useful to discuss how family obligations may be more likely to impede FGCS' abilities to successfully manage both family and school demands in college than they might have in high school (Witkow et al., 2015). Students with a strong sense of family obligation, which is often true for many FGCS, may encounter a conflict between attending college and continuing or beginning to provide financially for their family (Tseng, 2004). If this is a consideration for members of the group, it is critical for them to know the financial burdens that college may perpetuate. In addition to costs of tuition, housing, and books, attending college may reduce opportunities to help support their family with home care, childcare, or providing income through their own job (Witkow et al., 2015). Many of these financial obligations are influenced by family socioeconomic status and access to financial resources, such as information about applying for financial aid. FGCS' families' access to information about resources is another challenge to "college knowledge," as parents might be

unfamiliar with the United States educational system and be less likely to have the social capital to easily navigate financial aid resources (Dounay, 2008).

This group session is an opportunity for members to reflect on ways in which cultural and familial norms impact their duties and connectedness to their family and school. Beginning the conversation about these matters allows members to explore past experiences while starting to understand what they might want moving forward in terms of balancing responsibilities. In many ways, this session prepares students for all subsequent sessions by engaging in discussion that sheds light on and validates FGCS' significance placed on their family.

The third group session focuses on balancing school and family matters. By this time, students have started to explore their and their family's expectations of academic roles as well as family and home roles. The agenda for this week would include providing psychoeducation, and introducing and role-playing skills. Reviewing FGCS' changing roles is the foundation of psychoeducation during this session. Members will be provided information on and encouraged to continue discussing personal and family expectations for the student to uphold during their limited availability in college. FGCS can expect to experience pressure in having to maintain obligations to their home and family while adding a full college course load and tending to professional development (Pascarella et al., 2004). FGCS might face difficulty explaining the complexities of their new role to their parents and other family members, who might perceive this as alienation of their family or cultural roots (London, 1992). Recommendations surrounding this issue will be made in subsequent sessions. However, first, it is important to bring awareness to and explore barriers to taking on the new college student role. Overall, it is crucial for FGCS to understand their task of managing the transition from their home to school-oriented roles while understanding their changing responsibilities (Gibbons et al., 2016).

Building off this psychoeducation, facilitators will be able to introduce and demonstrate relevant skills. This sets up members to be able to role-play various issues with one another. This active and applied practice is an enactment or reenactment of a recent or planned conversation with their family members to better understand their and their family's feelings and thoughts (Weissman et al., 2008). These skills will focus on time management and value-driven goals and actions. Time management is a skill that students and researchers alike deem critical for college readiness (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005). There is no lack of time management strategies recommended in books and on the Internet. Many of these recommendations are widely circulated among schools and places of work. Time management for academic success based on concepts of cognitive psychology can be useful. Putnam, Sungkhasettee, and Roediger (2016) suggested prioritizing school, proper exercise, and adequate sleep. Their time management strategies include planning for the school term in advance using a calendar, reviewing noted commitments regularly, and setting calendar reminders in advance of commitments to tend to. Their recommended study strategies may also be useful, and include tips such as writing notes by hand, and spaced practice, which is studying the same content spaced out over time (Carpenter, Cepeda, Rohrer, Kang, & Pashler, 2012). These authors also recommend the widely known work of Linenberger's (2011) One Minute To-Do List, that helps prioritize opportunities and goals. Some time in this session would be devoted to reviewing time management tips and helping initiate a plan for implementing these strategies.

For many FGCS, there is a dilemma between their newer commitment to college and their established commitment to their family. Due to the short and longer term conflicts this might provoke, it could benefit students to spend more time understanding their personal and family-based values and how to act on them. In terms of skill development, Acceptance and

Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Emotion Efficacy Therapy (EET) can help ground the work of value-driven action. In an effort to set realistic goals toward balancing home and school, FGCS must come to truly understand their values. Harris (2009, 2014) explained that there are four steps to take toward committed action. Applying these concepts to FGCS, students can be instructed to follow these guidelines. After choosing a life domain necessitating change, students can choose which values they wish to pursue in this domain. Developed goals will be guided by these values. Finally, action can be taken. Setting values-based goals involves selection of a domain of life that one is looking to work on, developing SMART (specific, meaningful, adaptive, realistic, time-framed) goals, and identifying short, medium, and long term values-based goals (Lawlor, 2012). For example, students in the group can be guided in bringing to mind a conflict within the family about college-related issues. Within this domain, they can identify values important to them. Their goals related to the conflict and wanted change will be guided by which values they identify as key.

According to an EET framework, values-based action can help students recognize the moment of choice that occurs when they are emotionally triggered. From this process, students can learn to select values-based actions over emotion-driven urges (McKay & West, 2016). During the emotionally vulnerable period that college can be for many FGCS, it can be especially helpful to encourage students to remain alert to situations that prompt quick emotional responses, such as managing familial conflict. As an example, facilitators can prompt members to think about a typical verbal argument they might engage in with their parents, such as about the student not visiting home as much as their parents would want them to. First, members would guided to bring to mind values important to them, which might include connectedness, comfort, convenience, and so forth. By checking in with their values, they can start to make decisions

about what is important to them, what results they might want, and how to respond. If the member values connectedness and they believe they have grown distant from their family, they are able to use that building awareness to guide their potential decision to either soon make a visit to their family or speak with family members more regularly by phone.

As the roles of these FGCS shift from predominately familial to academic ones, understanding and preparation around expectations for change within their family system will be critical. Providing an open and nonjudgmental space in which students can offer and receive support is an essential component of this group session. Facilitation of a conversation exploring personal values regarding education and family can help students understand their own ideals. Additionally, members may be asked about what types of responsibilities have been added since beginning college, and what has been helpful in attempting to strike the balance between family and school.

Members can be the best source of support for one another when discussing challenges and successes in balancing responsibilities. While the conversation might steer in an advice-giving direction, it can be helpful for students to learn from one another. Relatedly, discussion of experiences with family conflict moderation between members can bring to life the reality of a challenge experienced by many FGCS. Again, advice-giving might be a predominant way members choose to demonstrate support, although facilitators may guide members to validate each individual's experience and the emotions shared. As the group sessions progress, it is expected that member-member and member-group cohesion increase. Member-member cohesion refers to a member's experience of the therapeutic bond with other members in the group. Member-group cohesion is the member's experience of cohesion within the group. (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007). A sense of group cohesion itself might be therapeutic. A general goal for the

group is to allow for members to experience an open space in which to experience the universality of their problems and be accepted by others.

Increasing family support (group session 4). The fourth session is focused on family support. The primary goal of this session is to explore ways to increase needed family support. Psychoeducation in this session is founded in the ways in which family members can and have demonstrated support to their FGCS. Additionally, psychoeducation and skills practice will help uncover other ways in which family can be helpful during the transition to college and how to elicit that support. Family support is a major component in these students' preparation for milestones and stressors of college. As FGCS continue to feel pressure to maintain obligations to their home life while also keeping up with academic demands, family support can become increasingly valuable. Support from family presents in various forms, including verbal and nonverbal ways individuals might demonstrate care and attention. Not only can family support help FGCS address specific college situations and challenges, it can also provide emotional support, validation encouragement, positive relationships, financial support and sacrifices (Fass & Tubman, 2002). Members will be continually guided to explore the various ways in which FGCS might be receiving or want receive support from their family.

Familial support can have a significant impact on the overall transition to college, including persistence throughout the college experience (Wang, 2012). FGCS are more likely to leave college than their non-FGCS peers, especially within the first year of college (Ishitani, 2003). Additionally, it is suggested that receiving higher levels of family support helps to decrease FGCS' level of stress (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008). These findings accentuate the importance of addressing FGCS role transitions and potential family-related challenges early on to help grow the potential for better adjustment overall. While some literature highlights family

acting as barriers to FGCS' persistence (Pascarella et al., 2004), there are also numerous ways in which families aid the persistence of these students throughout college. Family capital places a focus on the contribution of the family to assisting their children with attainment of higher education. Gofen (2009) defined family capital as, "the ensemble of means, strategies and resources embodied in the family's way of life that influences the future of their children. Family capital is implicitly and explicitly reflected through behavior, emotional processes and core values" (p. 115). While much of this can start during the child's early education, family members can also have a significant influence on FGCS' decision to stay in college once they are there (Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senecal, 2005). This session will use this knowledge to place an emphasis on how family members can continue to support members.

In addition to learning more about the support FGCS might need and how to elicit it from their family, this session also aims to grow members' awareness of possible tension and conflict within their family as they navigate their various roles. It is particularly critical that this session is introduced in a manner that validates the range of experiences that a student might have, including experiences that are possibly not discussed during the session. The intent and tone of this session are to convey that while there is research indicating certain challenges within this population and their families (e.g. less formal guidance through the college process, perceiving less familial support, difficulty managing home and school responsibilities, etc.), the information exchanged in this group will not capture the full or accurate experience of each group member. It is up to each member how they choose to speak to their individual experience as a FGCS, and facilitators will ensure that space and support is provided for this.

The psychoeducation for this session is founded in changes to expect in members' lives as college students and potential impacts on their family system or dynamics. For some students,

there might be a realization that their family members' unfamiliarity with college might interfere with the student's personal adjustment to college, including receiving criticism for prioritizing school tasks and adapting to college culture (Hsiao, 1992). This can lead to apparent tension noticed by the student, including a sense that they might be separating from their culture or family of origin. Sometimes, FGCS then feel compelled to renegotiate relationships with their family members (London, 1992; Mattanah et al., 2004). Further, since many FGCS arrive to college already doubting their academic abilities and motivation, any discouragement can reinforce these negative beliefs (Krumei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Striplin, 1999). Discussions that consider renegotiation of relationships, as well as ones that provide encouragement and support, will be guided in this session.

The influence of family culture is also critical to discuss. During this session, psychoeducation on culture is rooted in the idea that families' racial and ethnic identities and norms may have a significant impact on aspects of FGCS' psychosocial functioning. Speaking to their "pioneer" role and being more susceptible to the influence of perceived family support within their family as the first to attend college (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008) is a way to begin a discussion on students' identity within their family context. Related topics such as family achievement guilt are also relevant to this population and group session. The experiences associated with being the first in your family to attend college and surpass other family members' educational accomplishments may impact the college transition, including students feeling isolated or considering leaving college to better help their family (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

This group session is more experiential and the structure of psychoeducation, skill development, and group process and support can easily merge. After reviewing the importance

of family support and some expected sources of tension, it is time to facilitate group discussion. Special attention will be given to what type of support students might be looking for and what the ideal end result might look like. The discussions will help set up the content and process for the skill-based role-play exercise. Space would be provided for members to discuss their experiences and hesitations in asking for and receiving support from family. Further, members could be encouraged to share about concepts such as expectations to make family proud, and other areas that can impede receiving family support.

The role-play exercises in this session are based on identified stressors and needs for support, as well as specific feedback discussed earlier in the group. There are various ways to communicate negotiation of roles (Orbe, 2004) and numerous exercises are available to address this, including interpersonal effectiveness skills described later in this section. Group facilitators are welcome to implement interventions and exercises they believe would be useful here. The overarching guidelines would include encouragement of communicating stressors to family members, and collaborating on effective ways to ask for specific types of support. Facilitators may role-play with one another to demonstrate identifying challenges as a FGCS and suggested solutions of support. This communication would include sharing about experiences of adjustment to college culture and having limited availability to tend to various roles and responsibilities. Specifically, after spending some time understanding what they might need, FGCS would practice negotiating a new balance of roles and responsibilities between home and school. Practice of how to ask for what they believe they need is key. Included in this activity is discussion of potential barriers that might arise, such as parents not immediately having time or presenting other reasons to put off speaking with their FGCS about these issues. Today's college students are able to take advantage of breaking barriers through technological advances. Even if

FGCS live far from home while in college, they are able to keep in contact with their family members through phone, including text messaging. While text messages have grown as emerging adults' preferred method of communication, phone calls are also utilized frequently between parents and their growing children (Arnett, 2014). Incorporating practical suggestions, such as sending a text message to parents, is a simple yet effective reminder during sessions. This highlights the practicality of keeping in touch with family members, and in particular, using technology as a platform to elicit continued family support.

Many practical skills can be learned through interpersonal effectiveness models. Interpersonal skills are developed in group sessions by teaching specific communication skills. Some of the skills relevant to this group topic include selecting an appropriate time to engage someone in conversation, clearly defining expectations, attempting to understand the other individual's point of view, and preparing for anticipated and unanticipated results (Clougherty et al., 2014). One technique to demonstrate and have students practice is based on the DEARMAN (Linehan, 2015) skill from the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) framework. It can be used to resolve a conflict or make a request in a respectful and effective way that maintains a relationship. Using this acronym, FGCS would be guided to Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce, stay Mindful, Appear confident, and Negotiate. All of these components are relevant to asking family members for more support. This support could be non-verbal, such as asking parents to pick up tasks that were formerly a student's task, or having explicit conversations such as around purchasing a car to help out more and see family more often.

Boundaries (group session 5). The fifth and last session is focused on boundaries. Although family members are not present during sessions, psychoeducation on this topic is relevant for both FGCS and their family, as members are provided information on what both

sides can expect in this transition. This session also includes skill development in setting and maintaining boundaries. This knowledge base considers the members' change in roles, including modifying or departing from some roles or responsibilities. As FGCS attempt to establish separate family and school identities to manage conflicting goals (Orbe, 2008), maintaining boundaries becomes especially relevant. Even though FGCS might be living away from their family home, establishing boundaries with family can still be a challenge. Difficulty meeting obligations to the family can have negative impacts on these students' sense of well-being (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015), and boundaries can assist here in balancing getting needs met while preserving relationships. FGCS would benefit from building skills around awareness and flexibility in navigating various social situations, such as in maintaining appropriate boundaries. This session builds on previous sessions' psychoeducation, and highlights the need for establishing and maintaining boundaries with family members.

It is important to note that some members may perceive the term *boundaries* as harsh, unforgiving, and inaccurate to their experience. It is possible that some FGCS may not feel comfortable setting firm boundaries with family members. This might be due to perceiving an implication that setting a boundary means the FGCS is unwilling to help or be involved with the family. *Boundaries* may be defined by differently by each member and hold different connotations, so it is key to provide space to discuss reactions to the concept of boundary setting with family members and what might be realistic and meaningful to individual members.

Boundaries help define relationships with others, clarify a sense of self, and distinguish between different kinds of relationships. As students transition from high school to college, communication patterns with their parents might remain the same. This preserved pattern of communications, combined with students' tendencies toward identity formation, may exacerbate

challenges already present in forming and maintaining boundaries (Mattanah et al., 2004; Rosenberger, 2011). This information helps provide a framework for expectations to build around the complexities of this task in the group. Members' unsuccessful efforts to set or keep boundaries can be normalized in this context. As members think about the boundaries they might want to set with family members, it is essential to remember that boundaries and norms might change as demands and availability change. Students will know if their family discourages individualized decision making, and these students are encouraged to include family members in their decision-making around these role transitions (Schwartz et al., 2013). If there is a clash between making individualized decisions and honoring a student's cultural norms, FGCS would be encouraged to return to their identified values and goals to help inform their decision making.

Skill development in this session is focused on guiding students to identify important boundaries they want to establish with family members in ways that will support their mission to balance home and school responsibilities. Group facilitators may have experience in implementing useful interventions aimed at creating boundaries, and they are able to infuse this into the session. Facilitators should continue to remind members of establishing boundaries that reflect each of their needs and values, no matter the type of intervention that is implemented. Choices that reflect internal values can reinforce identity (Rosenberger, 2011), and members can be continually reminded of this.

A useful framework for establishing and maintaining boundaries is grounded in DBT (Eich, 2015). While many different skills can be targeted in learning to set boundaries, interpersonal effectiveness skills from DBT have been shown to be valuable within the college student population especially when practiced within a group setting (Engle, Gadischkie, Roy, & Nunziato, 2013). Although handouts and worksheets traditionally utilized in DBT skills groups

will not be provided in this group, dialectical behavior theory can inform group work and skill building in various ways. Interpersonal effectiveness skills, including ones that help maintain boundaries, aim to maximize the potential to have one's needs met without damaging relationships or self-respect (Linehan, 1993).

In order to begin to generate boundaries relevant for members, they will be asked to reflect on various domains. First, members will be asked to review and note on paper their home and school values to be able to reference while considering boundaries to implement. Time is the first limit that is considered, as it is one of the most apparent parts of members' life impacted by continuing to respond to increasing responsibilities. Members are encouraged to use time management skills learned in the third session to examine their weekly or monthly schedules for school and related responsibilities. They will be guided to identify an approximate number of hours they might need to tend to these tasks as well as an approximate number of hours they might have for other identified activities, such as meeting with parents over the weekend. By determining these details, members will more easily be able to communicate what they might and might not have time for (Eich, 2015). Regardless of time available, members are encouraged to continue thinking about how their values might impact their decisions.

Boundaries around communication are also critical (Eich, 2015). As members reflect further on their growing autonomy in college, they might also encounter challenges in altering long held communication patterns with their family members. It would benefit members to hear that they deserve respect, including respect of their changing roles. Members are encouraged to think critically about what types of messages and actions from family members demonstrate respect in this manner, and what remains unacknowledged or dismissed by family members. Family culture and norms are especially influential here, as families differ in communication

styles, including notions of *respeto* or respect (Harris Canul, 2003) of family hierarchy. The idea of creating boundaries might challenge some family's norms, and members will be encouraged to embrace this change. With respect to individuals within their family, members will be guided to consider which family norms may be flexible enough to mold in consideration of navigating roles differently.

Primary tasks of setting and maintaining boundaries are asking for what one needs and saying "no" (Eich, 2015). Since many members in the group are likely dedicated to maintaining harmony within their family role, it is hypothesized that they might have trouble denying requests from family members to tend to various duties. When boundaries are being established and members are asking for something or saying no to a request, they will want to decide how intensely they want to hold their ground. This may be determined by continuing to check in with values. Further, members will learn to contemplate the following considerations when deciding how firm they want to be with their boundaries: timing, personal or other person's capability in meeting demands, personal priorities, authority over other person, type of relationship held with other person, and effect of action on short-term and long-term goals (Linehan, 2015). For FGCS it is important to assert boundaries while sustaining the relationship with their family. Therefore, members will be encouraged to consider how to balance immediate goals with the health of the long-term relationship held with the family member. It is essential to continue reminding members that they are able and encouraged to consult their family members in conversations about how their role is shifting. Collaboration with family on what responsibilities are realistic and helpful to both the member's education and family can make for a more informed plan moving forward. Facilitators will guide members to share about their desires and hesitations to

include their family in their decisions about their academic career, including setting boundaries in prioritizing some academic demands.

Guiding questions here will help members be in touch with how to determine these resolutions for themselves. Depending on the needs of members in the group, various skills can be targeted and practiced. Members will be provided ample time to brainstorm negotiation of boundaries between school and family expectations. This practice will come in the form of facilitators providing psychoeducation on the skills, role-playing, and encouraging members to practice these skills in pairs or groups during the session. Facilitators will demonstrate how to build the practice of setting boundaries with various common themes as examples (e.g. telling parents that weekly home visits are no longer possible).

During a debriefing portion of this session, members can share their experience of practicing these interpersonal effectiveness skills in the session. Any barriers realized to having these conversations should be discussed. It is likely that various barriers might arise, including feelings of guilt and unsuccessful initial attempts at setting boundaries. To address anticipation of these occurrences, it would be helpful for facilitators to acknowledge the likelihood of having these experiences and normalize the discomfort of implementing a new and challenging change within the family system early on in the session. Providing knowledge that this task is one of many continued efforts aims to manage members' expectations and remind them that it will be a process of trial and error. Highlighting members' strengths demonstrated by making efforts to learn in the group, along with continuous validation, can empower members to find success in whatever ways work for them and their family.

As the group comes to an end, facilitators will provide space for members to share their experience of the group. Members will be encouraged to share which strategies or discussion

points they are most likely to use going forward. Facilitators will summarize group content and process, and provide any resources they deem appropriate, including printed campus and community support information, if not done previously. At this time, members may be provided further information on counseling resources, including opportunities for related psychotherapy groups or individual psychotherapy on or off campus. Additionally, facilitators can inquire with members about indicators that members might need additional assistance in managing family-related stressors. If the agency utilizes feedback forms, members will be asked to provide feedback on their experience of the group at the end of the session.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Project Summary

  Goals. The overarching goal of this project was to develop a set of recommendations in the form of a guide for mental health professionals on college campuses for the purpose of addressing the issue of role transition for first-generation college students (FGCS). Specifically, this guide would describe the formation of a psychoeducational support group that would aid FGCS in understanding changes to expect in family relationships as students transition to college, how to help the FGCS communicate with family members about these changes, and how to manage related family conflict as students shift from home-oriented roles to school-oriented roles. The challenges identified in the literature about providing this support to FGCS include FGCS' underutilization of psychological services compared to their non-FGCS peers, including barriers of stigma (Stebleton et al., 2014), and lack of knowledge about resources (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Consequently, there is limited research on the use of group-oriented resources on a university campus aimed at addressing the transition within from high school to college within the family context.

  The body of literature on FGCS and their shifts from home to school oriented roles ones and the associated challenges were used to develop recommendations for a psychoeducational support group to address these experiences, particularly as related to role changes that affect familial relationships. This guide was created by reviewing and analyzing relevant bodies of literature on FGCS, students' transition to college and the impact on familial relationships, and psychoeducational support groups. An emphasis was placed on findings drawn from literature on the importance of knowledge of the college experience, obligations to the family and home, balancing attention to both school and home, support from family, and establishing boundaries.

The literature was synthesized and assessed for areas of further study with the purpose of producing specific recommendations for a psychoeducational support group for FGCS designed to be administered in a university setting and facilitated by mental health professionals. In addition to adapting and integrating pre-existing guides and suggestions from the available literature, this author also composed several original recommendations for providing support to FGCS in a psychotherapy group setting. The guide of recommendations aims to support the needs of FGCS as they shift in their roles between navigating their home and academic life.

  Challenges. Several challenges were encountered in developing these recommendations. The primary challenge included drawing upon the limited literature in this specific area of study. Specifically, there was limited research on working with FGCS around issues of familial transitions. Additionally, little research exists on psychotherapy groups or other group-oriented resources for FGCS. This resulted in efforts to synthesize research on influences of family culture and dynamics with general psychotherapy group recommendations. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these noted recommendations would be valuable further determining strengths and limitations of the suggested group model.

  Strengths. The development of recommendations for a psychoeducational group for addressing family-related transitions and concerns among FGCS includes several strengths. First, there are significant benefits of service in implementing some or all of the recommendations in a college or university setting. The overall body of literature in this realm of study demonstrates the need to address role transitions for FGCS and how this may impact family relationships (Jenkins et al., 2013; Lopez, 1991; Pascarella et al., 2004; Sánchez et al., 2010). The resource aims to fill this gap in clinical attention for an increasingly diverse population.

The literature on FGCS suggests that receiving higher levels of family support helps to decrease the stress level in FGCS, and receiving lower levels of family supports leads to an increased stress level. Since family support serves a protective function in FGCS' stress level reduction and well-being, it is recommended that university clinicians develop outreach programming with parents in mind (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008). Therefore, a resource for a support group centered on FGCS' family-related concerns is one way to address factors that could ultimately enhance family members' understanding of the challenges their college student and help increase familial support for FGCS. The development of the group recommendations is a unique contribution to the literature, because, to this investigator's knowledge, no literature exists on specific recommendations for a psychoeducational or support group for FGCS that is focused issues of transition in the family context.

This type of group helps promote college students' personal and interpersonal growth within the realm of identity and relationships (Parcover et al., 2006). Literature and resources contributed by researchers and clinicians who work with FGCS support the idea that sharing experiences and emotions is a helpful intervention (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015; Hsiao, 1992). The recommendations for a group encourage critical psychoeducation, as well as a safe space in which students can share and receive support around their experiences of a distressing matter often experienced in isolation. Additionally, the creation of recommendations includes strengths of skill building through demonstration and practice (e.g., creating and maintaining boundaries). The various exercises in sessions may help personalize the psychoeducation and discussion matter while helping integrate new knowledge (Furr, 2000).

The development of a written group guide may help to reduce the discrepancies in the quality of services provided by providing a clear description of the format, process, and content

of group sessions. The minimal cost associated with potential dissemination of such a resource (which could include electronic dissemination) increases accessibility to universities and mental health professionals. The format allows for printed information relevant to the FGCS experience as well as an outline for session structure and activities. With this guide, group facilitators are able to have a foundation from which to understand and lead group content and process. Still, the format allows ample room for agencies and their facilitators to make adaptations or infuse other interventions they believe their students might benefit from. While many existing resources for FGCS focus on college admissions and academic success, this guide helps fill the gap demonstrated in the literature for assisting FGCS in their transition from their family to college oriented roles. Not only will the resource help FGCS hopefully resolve some family-related stress, it will also tend to improving personal functioning in other areas of their life. Family support for FGCS has been shown to significantly influence the overall transition to college including academic and social integration, retention and desire to complete school, and persistence throughout the college experience (Wang, 2012). Research identifies that FGCS experience unique difficulties that are based in stress related to social and cultural transitions, which might lead to emotional distress and potential mental health issues (Jenkins et al., 2013). Mitigating some of these concerns could contribute to a positive impact on various aspects of FGCS' lives.

Project Limitations

In addition to the strengths of this project, including its impact as a unique contribution to the field, some limitations exist. The group described in this guide requires the commitment of university resources to implement, including staffing the group with mental health professionals (e.g., licensed clinicians) as facilitators. Furthermore, it would be helpful for group facilitators to

have familiarity with the FGCS experience and skills in facilitating psychotherapy groups, which may pose some additional challenges to universities in securing qualified facilitators. Resources would also be needed to advertise the group to students and to determine when it is best to offer the group in an academic term. Thus, these recommendations presuppose the availability of campus clinicians ideally well versed on this clinical matter, staff personnel time, and psychotherapy group room and space.

In addition to potential limitations related to implementation of these recommendations, the recommendations are restricted by a presently limited body of empirical research on which the suggested group guidelines were based. The author utilized research on mental health, academic, and professional outcomes of FGCS to help represent the need for such a project. The narrow body of research on the experiences of FGCS within the context of their family required the application of literature on other related areas of research. This included research on family support, parental knowledge of the college experience, roles of and obligations to family and college, establishment of boundaries, and the use of psychoeducation and support psychotherapy groups.

Areas for Future Research and Development

The primary recommendations for future research and development include implementation and evaluation of the resource. First, the resource developed for this dissertation was not evaluated by subject matter experts in the fields of FGCS and psychoeducational groups. Such evaluation would be useful for refining the format, content, and processes currently outlined for the group and would aid in the establishment of the content validity of group protocol.

Another related limitation of this project is that the scope of the dissertation did not allow for the actual implementation of the group recommendations. Facilitation of the group using the created guide would provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed set of recommendations. Outcome variables could include degree to which new information about college expectations was learned, perceived ability to balance home and school demands, perceived ability to elicit family support, and effectiveness of setting and maintaining boundaries with family members. It would also be helpful to obtain feedback from group members about the structure and content of the group, as research highlights the value of client feedback in helping improve treatment outcomes and treatment retention (Slone, Reese, Mathews-Duvall, & Kodet, 2015).

One could also evaluate whether the most appropriate training and background for group facilitators. As noted earlier, individuals who are licensed mental health professionals with some familiarity with FGCS are preferred as facilitators; however, many universities may not be able to staff the group with such individuals. Evaluation of factors such as background and training of facilitators and group outcomes could help determine if a wider range of individuals could be effective facilitators (e.g., mental health program graduate student trainees, etc.). Additionally, evaluation of the format and structure of group sessions, such as in considering content and face validity, would be useful for any potential modifications.

Additionally, there is value in having group members complete forms before or during the first group session indicating their goals for their time in the group. Prior to joining the group, a pre-screening appointment can be helpful in having this discussion and determining fit for the group. It would be useful to look at member outcomes of groups that did and did not facilitate identification of goals and/or a pre-screening appointment. Feedback forms provided to

each member at the end of group would provide the opportunity for facilitators to understand members' experience of the group, including what they found beneficial and what they might want to change. Specifically, these feedback forms could provide information on the effectiveness of helping members reach their initially stated goals for joining the group.

Conclusion

According to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), it is estimated that 34% of undergraduate students were the first in their families to go to college in the 2011-12 academic year. An additional 28% of undergraduates had parents with at least some college experience but not a bachelor's degree. A large percentage of the overall college population therefore enters university life from a family background in which college attendance was not the norm. While entering the college system is a major achievement for these students, there are other experiences that accompany the FGCS journey that can make the transition to college more challenging. One of these experiences concerns the transition from home and family-oriented roles to college and student-oriented roles. The literature suggests that this transition sometimes produces tension or conflict within the family unit, as any prioritization of college is apt to disrupt some cultural or familial norms held prior to the student entering college.

The outcome research on FGCS' trajectories in areas of academics, professional achievement, and mental health demonstrate a need for supporting these students in ways that extend beyond traditional preparation for college. The importance of familial role and obligation transitions between home and college, and the impact of the college experience on family relationships suggest that it would be helpful to provide FGCS relevant information and skills in managing these transitions. A university-based psychoeducational support group to address these

matters would offer FGCS a safe space in which to learn, relate to another, and exchange support around an important but frequently overlooked area of challenge for FGCS – dealing with family-related changes following the start of their college careers. The author hopes this project promotes services for an underserved population of students who, in the formative years of college, could benefit greatly from support and guidance tailored to their experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Exemption Notice

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

April 30, 2018

Protocol #: **4302018**

Project Title: First Generation College Students' Family Role Transitions in College: A Psychoeducational Support Group

Dear Kimia:

Thank you for submitting a "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" related to your *First Generation College Students' Family Role Transitions in College: A Psychoeducational Support Group* project for review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has reviewed your submitted form and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above titled project meets the requirements for *non-human subject research* under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protection of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the form that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved project occur, you will be required to submit *either* a new "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" or an IRB application via the eProtocol system (httpw://irb.pepperdine.edu) to the Institutional Review Board.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at https://community.pepperdine.edu/irb/policies/.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval.

On behalf of the IRB, we wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Pepperdine University

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research
        Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist
        Dr. Judy Ho, Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB Chair

APPENDIX B

First in the Family Group Guide

First in the Family

A Guide to Facilitating a
Psychoeducational Support Group
For First-Generation College Students

Inside this Guide

First-Generation College Students

The attainment of higher education is a benchmark many students aim to reach. The college student population continues to grow in their demographic diversity, including cohorts of first-generation college students (FGCS). These students' status is typically defined as students whose parents never enrolled in post-secondary education. While other criteria exist in defining FGCS, the experience of being the first in one's family to attend college is a unique one. Although entering college is a major achievement in FGCS' academic careers, several factors have the potential to significantly impact their academic and occupational success, including some factors related to how they navigate family conflict and change. As college students transition from their familial role and grow into their developing student role, they often face unique stressors related to family issues (e.g., balancing time devoted to family and school). As the FGCS population continues to grow, colleges and universities will need to strive to meet these students' needs.

FGCS demonstrate a need for understanding and coping with the newly expected challenges within the family and managing family-related stress. One way to provide this support is through facilitating a group space for these students. In particular, a psychoeducational support group would deliver relevant information on expectations and norms, while also providing ample space for peer support exchange and skill development. This guide offers a set of recommendations for facilitating such a group for FGCS. It allows flexibility in implementation for various considerations, and aims to be a reference in supporting FGCS in their college journey.

In this guide, you will find the purpose and goals of this group, weekly group structure recommendations, and other considerations for a group for students who are the *First in the Family*.

Purpose

This psychoeducational support group is for students who identify as first-generation college students (FGCS). The overall purpose of this group is to provide a space for FGCS to address an important, but often neglected, area of potential stress and conflict, namely changes in family-related relationships and obligations that may result from a member of the family attending college. Secondarily, the group provides a mechanism for establishing a network of FGCS. The group's specific goals include providing familiarization with changes that might occur in FGCS' families during the transition to college, how to create an understanding of this transition within the family, and how to manage family-related stress that might arise. Objectives of this group include FGCS learning and feeling prepared to convey to their family their expected transitions, as well as coping with family-related stress.

Member Participation

This group is most suitable for a four-year university or college setting, although the group content can be adapted as seen fit by group facilitators at junior or community colleges. While there is no age minimum or maximum for group members, the content most readily captures the experiences of students ages 18 through 22. A group size of 7 to 10 members is ideal for group discussion. It is possible for the group to be larger since there is a significant focus on psychoeducation, although increases in group size will limit time for individual sharing. It is important to convey group norms that encourage attendance of all five sessions. Members are encouraged to engage in between-session practice of skills in an effort to build confidence and discuss their experiences in sessions.

Group Facilitators

Co-facilitation, including two facilitators, is recommended for leading the group, as it would benefit the effort of role-plays and guiding larger group discussions. Each agency is to use these guidelines to determine appropriate facilitators for this group, including considerations of licensure and area of expertise. Familiarity with issues concerning FGCS is essential to be able to facilitate a group of this nature. Co-facilitating is a strong recommendation when considering one facilitator who is without a practicing license. Otherwise, individuals with a license in the mental health field could likely be an appropriate fit for facilitating this group.

Setting

This group may take place in a college counseling center or in another gathering space on campus. While the stigma of receiving services at a counseling center might act as a barrier to students seeking out this group, holding sessions at the counseling center can also be a way to reach students in a more convenient manner.

Other Group Considerations

A pre-screening process with potential members would provide students and the facilitators an opportunity to determine together if the group is a good fit for the student. Key criteria for membership eligibility would include identification with being a FGCS and a desire to build knowledge and support around the transition from home-oriented to school-oriented roles. This group would work best as a closed group, so that members can build trust and support. Group sessions should aim to start toward the beginning of each term. With five sessions per group

series, there is more flexibility in offering two sequential sections of this group per school term or offering the group once per term. Out of group contact can be permitted as long as all members are invited if and when a gathering is initiated. The group may be advertised in the college counseling center, introductory university courses, and any other location where a student may be reached.

Group Session Structure

Five sessions, or "meetings," will run once weekly for 90 minutes each. This would allot flexible time for psychoeducation at the start of each session followed by semi-structured time for peer support and skill development. Each session may begin with a set agenda to help structure time for facilitators and members. The weekly group topics will be covered in this order: *College knowledge, family and home obligations, balancing school and family, increasing family support, boundaries.*

Sociocultural Considerations

Discussions of family-related changes and tensions related to FGCS' shifting roles are likely to be complex and variable. It is vital that facilitators regularly acknowledge and validate how members will have various experiences and needs depending on their psychosocial histories. Importantly, the contexts in which the group might occur are influential. Being aware of current events, campus and community climate, and sociopolitical climate are key in contextualizing some of the issues relevant to FGCS. Therefore, facilitators must reflect on and convey cultural humility in order to develop trustworthy therapeutic relationships and advocate appropriately for members.

How to Use This Guide

This guide has been developed as a tool to help facilitate a psychoeducational support group for FGCS. For each week's session, a suggested list of prompts, psychoeducational information, and/or activities is outlined. While these recommendations are based on a review of literature and other resources on FGCS, there is flexibility in structuring the group to include various needs of the students, university, and facilitators. Reference information for more readings [1] is included at the end of this guide.

Week 1: College Knowledge

Introduction of group facilitators and purpose of group

- Facilitators' names and roles
- Purpose of group
  - A group for first-generation college students (FGCS) to receive social and emotional support
  - Address role transitions from home-oriented to school-oriented roles
  - Become familiar with changes that might occur during the transition to college
  - Co-create an understanding of transition within family
  - Manage family-related stress

Member introductions activity

- Activity ("icebreaker") [2] that will allow all members to introduce themselves

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Introductions Activity Idea

Name, Year in school, Major, Hometown, Something their hometown is known for or that they enjoy about it

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Group norms and guidelines

- Weekly attendance, punctuality, absence policy
- Location, meeting time, duration of sessions, group size
- Socialization permitted between group members
- Structure of the group for psychoeducation and peer support
- Confidentiality maintained by facilitators, agreed upon by members

Campus resources

- Provide verbal and tangible information on relevant campus and community programs focused on the needs of FGCS, including types of support they can offer
- Encourage students to seek support to become better served, informed, and engaged
- Review opportunities to become student leaders
  - Organizations for FGCS (i.e. TRIO, Educational Opportunity Program)
  - Academic Advising Departments
  - Financial Aid Office
  - Cultural Centers

Influence of parental familiarity with college

- Parental knowledge of the college experience as a key distinguishing factor between the FGCS and non-FGCS college experience
    - Parents' knowledge of academic and social expectations can facilitate students' socialization to the college environment
        - Students now have the opportunity in the group to learn more for themselves and share with their family
    - Limited familial guidance before starting college
        - There might be uncertainty about their fit with this school and how to make informed decisions moving forward
        - Empower FGCS to build and trust their decision-making skills and recognize when and how to seek additional guidance
    - College knowledge also influences career path
        - FGCS might need additional support making decisions on their academic path that would align with their career goals
        - Link to academic advising departments and encourage scheduling meetings with professors and others in their field to build ideas for how to merge school and career

Other influences

- "College knowledge" can also be conveyed by parents in the form of emotional support
    - Ways in which family support can be helpful, and how to foster it, will be discussed further in a later session
    - Inquire about helpful knowledge that has been provided by parents
- This support can also be provided in this group through building awareness and understanding of college culture
    - Continue to make note that members are also there to learn from one another and can be one another's most helpful source of knowledge and support
    - Provide space for members to offer each other suggestions in the form of "college knowledge" (i.e. helpful tips to know about work-study opportunities, interesting elective classes to enroll in, etc.)

Group discussion on college expectations

- Thoughts about expectations for college set by family, friends, high school teachers and counselors, self
- Often FGCS hear too many messages about what to expect or nothing at all
    - Validate the potential feelings of overwhelm, worry, or doubt in this process
    - Inquire about messages received from others and students' own beliefs about college

- How experiences thus far in college have aligned with expectations of self and others
  - Elicit thoughts about experiences that have been surprising or challenging of past beliefs
  - Facilitate discussion on hopes and goals for the future
  - Continue to help build trust and connection between members by highlighting experiences that multiple members relate to

Remember to Build

Knowledge

Trust

Safety

Connection

Week 2: Family and Home Obligations

Influence of family culture and norms

- Home-school value conflict
    - Oftentimes for FGCS there is a conflict between family and academic values
    - Tension between individualistic college demands and collectivistic family demands can peak during college
    - Family might assume students will prioritize family role because family is permanent and college is impermanent
    - Some home-based values will be consonant with college-related goals and values
        - *Where do you see you and your family on this spectrum of values? Do you and your family members hold some of the same views and assumptions? Which sets of values are similarly aligned?*

        Psychoeducation and discussion to be guided by members sharing family culture and experiences

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- Individualistic and collectivistic values
    - Individualistic values tend to highlight independence, looser family and social structures, and fewer expectations to care for the family
    - Collectivistic cultures tend to be interdependent, have closer family and social structures, and have more expectations to provide care for the family
    - Many FGCS, especially as children of immigrants, are from families with collectivistic values
    - Fewer economic resources, experienced by many FGCS, are often associated with collectivism and relying on family members
        - *How have economic resources, such as financial aid or family wealth, impacted your journey before and after entering college?*

        Highlight ways in which members relate to grow connections

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- Incompatibility
  - Parents might not realize the partial incompatibility between school and family values
  - FGCS are tasked with trying to adapt to college while maintaining home identities, which could lead to family dissonance or culture shock
  - Desire to stay connected to family is common and a protective factor
    - Validate complex emotions related to wanting to remain connected with and contribute to family while in college, yet also wanting to have new experiences, form new relationships, etc.
    - Encourage members to reflect on how their values and their parents' fit into these structures

Introduction to family obligations

- Members have likely encountered trying to manage family obligations as they have begun college
- Family obligations may be more likely to impede FGCS' abilities to successfully manage both family and school demands in college than they did in high school
- There is likely pressure to maintain obligations to the home and family while adding a full college course load and tending to professional development and making new friends
- Students with a strong sense of family obligation may encounter a conflict between attending college and continuing or beginning to provide financially for their family
- Attending college might perpetuate financial burdens as there are costs involved with tuition, housing, and textbooks, while there are reduced opportunities to help support their family with home care, childcare, or providing income through a job
- Many of these financial obligations are influenced by family socioeconomic status and access to financial resources, such as information about applying for financial aid

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Information exchanged will not capture the full or accurate experience of each group member

It is up to each member how they choose to speak to their individual experience as a FGCS, and facilitators should encourage this

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Group discussion on family responsibilities

- Messages received about responsibility to the home and family
    - *Which duties are explicitly stated and which are implied?*
    - *What is the response if you are not able to tend to duties?*
    - *Do you view "obligations" and "values" as similar or different ideas?*
- Personal expectations and strains on taking care of the home
    - *How would you like to contribute to your home and family?*
    - *What gets in the way of your being able to contribute?*
    - *Are there new/different ways to contribute to the family?*
- Understand home obligations before and after beginning college
    - *Have there been any changes to what is expected of you by family since beginning college?*
    - *How have these expectations been communicated?*
      Has there been any discussion of them?

Week 3: Balancing School and Family

Students' changing roles

- Review main themes from previous session's discussion on exploration of family expectations

- There is a pressure to maintain obligations to the home and family while adding a full college course load, building a social network, and tending to professional development

- There is limited and decreasing time available for FGCS to be able to tend to as many home and family needs once they enter college

- There might be difficulties in trying to speak to family about the new role especially if this might be perceived as an alienation of cultural or family roots

- FGCS are tasked with managing a balance between their home and school role transitions and responsibilities

Time management

- Time management is a skill critical for college readiness

- Although the time spent tending to family obligations may need to change when the student is in school, good time management can help students maximize the time they have for non-school related activities, including those related to family

- Introduce structure of skill building, including psychoeducation and demonstration by facilitators, followed by individual practice or role-play between members

- Use examples of the following suggestions to demonstrate time management skills, such as writing down important deadlines and events for the following week. Guide members to do the same for one or more of these suggestions:
  - Planning for the school term in advance using a calendar, reviewing noted commitments regularly, and setting calendar reminders in advance of commitments
  - Prioritizing opportunities and goals on written lists
  - Writing notes by hand, and spaced practice, which is studying the same content spaced out over time

- Elicit ideas from group members about effective time management strategies

- Review time management tips and help encourage a plan for implementing strategies to be written down (e.g. "One Minute To-Do List) [3]

Time Management:

"One Minute To-Do List"

Value-driven goals and actions

- Skill development through Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) [4] and Emotion Efficacy Therapy (EET)

- Understanding personal and family-based values can help set realistic goals and committed action toward balancing demands

- Instruct FGCS to choose a life domain that they want to promote some change in and values they wish to pursue in this domain from which they want to set goals

- Guide students to bring to mind a conflict within the family about college-related issues, and identify important values in this domain

- Values will guide their goals in college-related issues

- Values-based action can help members recognize the moment of choice that occurs when they are emotionally triggered

    o Example: *Imagine typical argument with parents*

        ▪ Remind self about important values

        ▪ Use values as a guide for what is desired, how to prioritize it, and how to respond

- Demonstrate and practice targeting value-driven goals to learn to select values-based actions over emotion-driven urges

    o Select a life domain to address

    o Identify SMART goals based on values (5) and plan for short term, intermediate, and long term goals

        ▪ Example: *Family life domain*

            • *SMART Goal: I will call my family twice per week, at the beginning and end of the week, and leave myself approximately 30 minutes to talk with them each time*

            • *Short term: Call family to maintain consistent contact*

            • *Intermediate: Begin to establish new norms regarding communication while in college*

            • *Long term: Maintain positive relationship and dynamics with family while in college*

SMART Goals

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound

Group discussion on balancing responsibilities

- *What are your personal values regarding education and family?*
- *What responsibilities have you added since beginning college?*
- *What has helped make the balance between home and school more manageable?*

Week 4: Increasing Family Support

Significance of family support

- Family support is a major component in preparation of milestones and stressors of college
- As academic demands increase and are added to home demands, family support will become increasingly valuable
- Ways in which family might offer support can evolve before, during, and after college, and there are still opportunities to elicit that support
- Family support have impact on overall transition and persistence throughout college
    - Can offer motivation and support to remain in college
    - Can decrease level of stress
    - Can help feel better adjusted to college overall

Forms of support

- Verbal and nonverbal ways of demonstrating care and attention
- Support addressing specific college situations and challenges
- Encouragement, validation, positive relationships, advice, financial help

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Family Support

comes in many

different forms,

including sending and

receiving text messages

Barriers to support

- Not all FGCS will have the same experiences with family support and barriers to receiving it
- Family's unfamiliarity with college might translate to family tension or conflict
    - Criticism for prioritizing school responsibilities and adapting college culture
    - Sense of separating from culture or family
    - Discouragement, reinforcement of negative beliefs about academic abilities
- Family culture, including cultural norms, is influential, but not necessarily a barrier
- Being a "pioneer" as the first in the family to navigate college might increase susceptibility to the influence of perceived family support

- Family achievement guilt includes the experiences related to being the first in the family to attend college and surpass family members' educational accomplishments

    o This may lead to feeling isolated or considering leaving school to help family more immediately

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"Pioneer" role

Being the

first in the family

to have this

college experience

Group discussion

- Ideal forms of support and desired end result

    o *Which forms of support have you received from family? How have these forms of support helped you in your college career so far?*

    o *Which forms of support do you wish to receive from family moving forward?*

- Experiences and hesitations asking for and receiving support from family

    o *How do you feel about "pioneering" this journey?*

    o *How have requests for support been responded to in the past?*

- Areas impeding on receiving family support

    o *What gets in the way of receiving or accepting support from family?*

    o *Do personal expectations (e.g. needing to make parents proud, feeling guilty about making requests, etc.) act as barriers to getting support?*

Communicating with family

- Members are guided to identify stressors and needs for support to later apply to exercises

- Facilitators role-play ideas surrounding how to communicate stressors to family and ask for specific types of support

    o Cite challenges (e.g. difficulty managing increasing demands)

    o Note requested forms of support (e.g. encouragement to persist, asking parents to visit them on campus)

- Guide members to practice in pairs:

    o Sharing about experiences of adjustment to college culture and having limited availability to tend to various roles and responsibilities

    o Negotiating a new balance of roles and responsibilities between home and school, with emphasis on asking family for ideas on striking this balance

- Discuss how to respond to potential barriers to receiving requested support
    - Limiting distractions to the conversation
    - Using technology (e.g. text messages, social media) for ease and speed
    - Preparing for making compromises and offering alternative resolutions
    - Identifying other sources of support outside of family

Skills practice

- Demonstrate and practice interpersonal effectiveness skills
- "DEARMAN" exercise from Dialectical Behavior Therapy [6] is recommended to resolve a conflict or make a request in a respectful and effective way that maintains a relationship
- Use the "DEARMAN" acronym to ask for wanted support
- This support could be non-verbal (e.g. having parents pick up tasks that were formerly the student's task) or verbal (e.g. having explicit conversations such as about purchasing a car to help out more and see family more often)
- This example may be used to illustrate a member using "DEARMAN" to request their parents to visit them on campus, rather than the member visiting parents at home every weekend
    - *Describe* the challenges about visiting home each weekend
    - *Express* feeling worried about implications of leaving campus each weekend
    - *Assert* the request for parents to visit campus once per month
    - *Reinforce* that monthly visits from parents would give the student more time to spend with parents and introduce them to their college when they arrive to campus
    - Stay *Mindful* of continuing to describe, assert, and reinforce request
    - *Appear* confident by speaking clearly and maintaining eye contact
    - *Negotiate* by asking parents how they want to compromise details of this request or other solutions

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Describe the situation

Express clearly how you feel or what you believe

Assert what you want

Reinforce the other person

Mindful of objectives in the situation

Appear confident with voice tone and physical manner

Negotiate alternative solutions   *(Linehan, 2015)*

Week 5: Boundaries

Psychoeducation review

- Members are likely to have strained schedules (academic course load, extracurricular activities, professional opportunities, expansion of social network)
- Roles will shift from home-oriented to school-oriented roles, and boundaries will be valuable in helping maintain a balance
- Obligations to the family will still exist, and there could be negative impacts on sense of well-being in difficulty meeting obligations
- Boundaries can be useful in helping both FGCS and their family understanding demands and preserve relationships
- The term *boundaries* might sound harsh or inaccurate for some members, so it is important to consider various perspectives

Boundaries

- Boundaries help define relationships with others, clarify a sense of self, and distinguish between different kinds of relationships
- Communication patterns between students and family members often stay the same between high school and college, and this might make new boundaries difficult to establish
- Boundaries might evolve and are associated with personal values
- Creation of boundaries might challenge family norms

Boundaries

are helpful for

both FGCS and their

family members

Brainstorming boundaries

- Guide members to write down their home and school values to reference while considering boundaries to implement
- Use time management skills to determine how many hours are needed for school and other demands, so that it is easier to communicate what there is additional time for
- Think about messages and actions from family, and which of these demonstrate respect of changing role
- Identify domains that are potentially more open to change within family dynamics
- Model and role-play interpersonal effectiveness skills to address boundary issues
- Brainstorm negotiation of boundaries between school and home expectations

Setting and maintaining boundaries

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy framework is helpful in guiding skills

- Ask for what you need and say "no" to what you cannot do or do not want, which is likely difficult for family-oriented students

- Check in with values to determine how intensely student wants to stand firm on decision to ask for or deny something

- Consider the following when deciding firmness in maintaining boundaries: timing, personal or other person's capability in meeting demands, personal priorities, authority over other person, type of relationship held with other person, and effect of action on short-term and long-term goals

- Sustaining relationships with family members is also key, so there needs to be consideration of balancing immediate goals of the boundary and relationship held with the family member

- Consultation and collaboration with family members is encouraged to help make informed decisions about boundaries

- Recognize that initially setting boundaries may not result in positive feelings – either in the student or family – but that this is not unusual and can change over time

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Say "No"
and
ask for what is needed

Skills practice

- Elicit examples of common themes to help demonstrate skills a member might utilize in requesting what they need or saying "no"
  (e.g. telling parents that weekly home visits are no longer possible)

- Role-play between facilitators and then pair members together to practice having these conversations with family members

- Provide acknowledgement and normalization of implementing a new and challenging change within the family system

- Highlight members' strengths and continuously provide validation

Group discussion

- *What are your hopes and concerns in including family in decisions regarding boundaries or other choices about academic career?*

- *How will family feel about these boundaries and how can you maintain this support? Who/what are other sources of support?*

- *What are the barriers to establishing boundaries?* (e.g. feelings of guilt and unsuccessful initial attempts at setting boundaries)

- Continue to empower members to embrace this challenge, and normalize and validate reactions

Debrief and termination

- Debrief by eliciting thoughts on experience in group

- Summarize and review key points of group

- Elicit from group members which strategies or discussion points they will be most likely to use going forward

- Review relevant campus resources, including counseling services

    - Inquire with group members what would be indicators that students need additional assistance in dealing with family-related stressors

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Members complete
feedback forms

If utilized by agency

More Readings

(1) Center for First-generation Student Success,
     an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation

     https://firstgen.naspa.org/

(2) *A Collection of Icebreakers and Connection Activities*
     by Julie A. Pack

     *https://inclusiveschools.org/wp-
     content/uploads/2015/09/Student_Connection_Activities_and_Icebreakers.pdf*

(3) Linenberger, M. (2011). *The one minute to-do list*. Danville, CA: New Academy.

(4) The Happiness Trap: Values Worksheets
     by Russ Harris

     https://thehappinesstrap.com/upimages/Complete_Worksheets_2014.pdf

(5) Lawlor, K. B. (2012). Smart goals: How the application of smart goals can contribute to
     achievement of student learning outcomes. In *Developments in business simulation and
     experiential learning: Proceedings of the annual ABSEL conference*: Vol. 39.

(6) Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT skills training manual* (2nd edition). New York, NY: Guilford
     Press.