EXPERIENCES RELATED TO BELONGING AND INVOLVEMENT FACED BY STUDENTS WHO ARE FIRST-GENERATION THAT LIVE IN RESIDENCE HALLS

by

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(Under the Direction of Diane L. Cooper)

ABSTRACT

Significant research supports the premise that students who live in residence halls receive advantages that enable them to succeed in college (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Research on students who are first-generation illustrates the barriers they face accessing and persisting in college (Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007); however, little research portrays their experiences after enrolling such as getting involved, establishing connections, and living in residence halls (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences related to belonging and educational involvement faced by students who are first-generation and how living in residence halls might influence them.

The researcher utilized a quantitative research design to conduct a study through an online questionnaire comprised of (a) the Institutional Integration Scale (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), and a subtask of (b) the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (Winston, Miller, & Cooper, 1999) to measure belonging and educational involvement respectively. The participants in the study (n = 81) were degree-seeking,
undergraduate students from a mid-sized, four-year, public university located in the southeastern United States. The researcher employed a one-way, between-subjects design to analyze the collected data. No significant findings were identified at the .05 alpha level based on the data analysis.

INDEX WORDS: First-generation, Belonging, Involvement, Residence halls, College Student, Institutional Integration Scale, Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015
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December 2015
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Mom and Dad, who made the person I am today, and to Melanie, Madison, and Julia, who make me strive to be best version of myself I can be.

You can accomplish anything if you never lose sight of your dreams. Thank you for helping make mine come true.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” – Lao Tzu

There are so many people I wish to thank for their ongoing support in my journey. I completed my first half-marathon during this process and the experiences are so similar. Like a marathon, you count on your fellow participants to help you keep pace, but also those lined up along the course cheering you on and those waiting for you at the finish line to greet you with open arms to celebrate your journey’s end.

First and foremost, I could not have maintained the drive to see this through without the ongoing support from my wife Melanie. I know the last few years have not been easy and you have taken on the extra load from my nights and weekends in class. Even when I have been physically home, I have been mentally absent trying to stay focused on work and school. I owe you more than words can ever express.

Dr. Diane Cooper – As my chair, you have been my advisor and counsel, coach and friend, throughout this process. Thank you for keeping me on track, but always having my back. Every step of the way, I have known you had my best interests and my goals are heart and you never let me down in either. Your strong and quiet encouragement helped my successfully navigate the calm and stormy seas of this process.

Drs. Bill McDonald, Jan Barham, and Richard Mullendore – Each of you served on my committee at one stage and each of your contributed uniquely to my experience. Thank you so much for donating your time and energy, but also for donating your wisdom. I am a better scholar-practitioner because of each of you.
To Cohort Awesome – Brandee Appling, Jason Cavin, Loni Crumb, Rebecca Eaker, Camile Irving, Taryne Mingo, Cheryl Sewell, and Shauna Nefos Webb – It was an honor to run this marathon with you. While it was inevitable that we would always reach a stage where we were running our own race, I can think of no better group of people with whom to have experienced the journey. I have learned so much from all of you and appreciate the encouragement and praise you bestowed on me during our time together.

To my colleagues and friends – There are so many that played a role in helping me accomplish this goal, but I would be remiss if I did not thank Michael, Natalie, Justin, Bob, Jen, Gerry, Josh, Jake, Keisha, Adrienne, and KC. Each of you helped me in different ways, but reaching my finish line is in no small part thanks to your collective support. I owe Michael a particular debt of gratitude for supporting my desire to pursue this degree, knowing it would take me away from my work.

Finally – to my family – Melanie, Madison, Julia, Mom, Dad, James, and Abbey - who were on the sidelines and at the finish line waiting for me to cross. This race is over and I am forever grateful that you cheered me along the way.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Students who are the first generation in their families to attend college face a number of barriers related to aspiration, access, and persistence in higher education including concerns with involvement, belonging, and on-campus living (Astin, 1993; Engle, 2007; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Stebleton & Soria, 2012). Secondary and post-secondary educators have developed a number of initiatives to improve college access and persistence opportunities for this population (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006). For example, Engle (2007) cited TRIO, GEAR UP, and the McNair Scholars Program as modern academic pathways to assist these students. Despite the work conducted on improving access and persistence for this population, more could be done to examine keys areas related to persistence such as involvement, belonging, and living in residence halls. Each of these areas is widely regarded as a key contributor to student satisfaction, retention, and persistence; however, the ability to experience them may be different between students who are first-generation and those who are not (Astin, 1993; Berger & Milem, 1999; Pascarella et al.). If barriers to these experiences are not addressed, then secondary and post-secondary educators might overlook an opportunity to not only open co-curricular pathways for students who are first generation, but also increase college and university retention rates.
Students who are First-Generation

College enrollment remains a strong predictor for lifelong success because college graduates have higher rates of employment and lifetime earnings, higher levels of civic engagement and volunteerism, and healthier lifestyles, including lower rates of obesity and smoking (Balemian & Feng, 2013). Despite the benefits of a college degree, significant research draws attention to the idea that students who are first-generation cannot obtain a college education as easily as their continuing-generation peers (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Xianglei, 2000; Engle, 2007; Mudge & Higgins, 2010; Stebleton & Soria, 2012). Students who are first generation, meaning neither of whose parents completed or attend college, experience barriers related to (a) enrollment, (b) socioeconomic status, and (c) persistence, in their aspiration and attainment of higher education.

Enrollment Barriers

First generation college students, beginning in early childhood, develop lower expectations about the level of education they might receive and develop different plans related to when they will enroll in college, whether right after high school or on a delayed timeline, if they do at all (Engle, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004). Research indicates that parents of students who are first-generation are less likely to engage in discussions about college, help their students choose their high school curriculum, and fail to encourage their students to participate in college preparatory coursework such as algebra (Engle, 2007). A National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study in 2001 found that 82 percent of students who are not first-generation enrolled in college immediately after high school whereas only 54 percent of students whose parents completed high school and 36
percent of students whose parents did not complete high school attended college after high school graduation (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Choy, 2001). As a result, students who are first-generation are underrepresented in college enrollment statistics (Choy; Renn & Reason, 2013).

**Socioeconomic Barriers**

Students who are first-generation tend to come from low-income and ethnically underrepresented families (Engle, 2007). The intersection of first-generation status with low-income backgrounds is meaningful because the parents of these students are less likely to save for tuition costs and are less aware of the financial resources available to college students (Bozick, 2007; Engle). Conversely, the parents of upper-income students are more likely to have saved for their students’ education because they consider themselves responsible for that cost (Bozick). Similarly, many low-income students work part-time jobs while in college just to subsidize the cost of attendance, whereas the students least likely to be employed are those from high-income families and those from the lowest-income families (Bozick). The highest-income student is ineligible for financial aid, but does not need it, whereas the lowest-income student is eligible for enough financial aid that their out-of-pocket cost of attendance is very low. The Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study provided data about dependent students whose parents did not complete high school or only achieved a high school diploma or equivalent (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Students whose parents’ total income was less than $39,999 received far more total financial aid than students did whose parents’ total income ranged between $40,000 and $79,999. The latter
underserved group in this example cannot receive as much aid and must work to subsidize its education, which may jeopardize their persistence and success in college.

Persistence Barriers

Because of the need to work part-time jobs to subsidize their cost of attendance and maintain consistent enrollment, students who are first-generation struggle to perform at the same level as their continuing-generation peers (Bozick, 2007). Bozick cited that students who work 20 hours or more per week during the first year of college are less likely to persist. The demands of balancing part-time employment and full-time enrollment result in lower grades that lead to this population possessing lower educational expectations (Bozick). Those demands leave less time for students who are first-generation to participate in campus activities, thereby leaving them less socially engaged (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996b). In some instances, students interrupt their enrollment for at least one term, an enrollment trend known in the literature as “stopping out,” that is most commonly associated with students from low-income backgrounds (Horn & Nunez, 2000; Renn & Reason, 2013). Since participating in campus life is so critical to retention and persistence (Astin, 1993), anything that would inhibit that participation could be viewed as a barrier and anything that would remove that barrier could be seen as a solution to the problem.

Involvement

Involvement in college is widely known to support student persistence (Astin, 1993; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Tinto, 1975). Astin translated involvement to consider academic and extracurricular engagement so much of what occurs both inside and outside of a college classroom is defined as involvement. Due to
the increased accessibility to the campus and promotion of structured activities that occur with residence halls, living in residence halls is viewed a significant contributor to involvement (Astin; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller, 2007). Despite this, research indicates that students who are first-generation are less likely to participate in campus extra-curricular activities and live in residence halls (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Bozick, 2007; Engle, 2007; Lundberg et al.) due to commitments to family, home, and work. Another key contributor to persistence, belonging, is linked to involvement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983).

**Belonging**

As students enroll in college and begin classes, some may begin to feel a connection to that institution’s environment and some may not. The sense of belonging that is established in the first few weeks of a student’s college career begins to shape their future success while in school (Berger & Milem, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). Involvement and living in residence halls are precursors to a positive sense of belonging (Berger & Milem; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; O’Keeffe, 2013), but as with involvement research has shown students from marginalized populations are less likely to connect with the institution (Hurtado & Carter; Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alvarez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon, & Longerbeam; 2007; Stebleton, Soria, & Huesman, 2014a). A question exists on how students who are first-generation experience belonging compared to their peers. While some students who are first-generation may be able to access living in residence halls, the impact of this opportunity on their experiences must also be examined (Inkelas et al., 2007).
The Value of Living in Residence Halls

Decades of research support the premise that co-curricular activities, such as living in residence halls, enhances educational involvement and belonging (Astin, 1993; Blimling, 2003; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, Zusman, Inman, & Desler, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who live in residence halls gain higher critical thinking skills (Pascarella et al.), and reach greater learning outcomes related to cultural and intellectual values, self-esteem, independence, and responsibility than commuter students (Chickering, 1974; Pascarella et al.). Students living in residence halls engage more with faculty and are more likely to get involved in athletic events, clubs, and organizations, such as fraternities and sororities (Astin; Blimling). Data from the U.S. Department of Education substantiates the noticeable differences in these areas between students who live in residence halls and students who commute.

The Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (2004) provided data about students who lived on-campus and off-campus and their frequency to experience (a) talking with faculty outside class, (b) school clubs, and (c) school sports (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Seventy percent of students who lived on campus reported they experienced talking with faculty outside class compared to 54 percent of students who lived off-campus and 57 percent of students who lived with their parents. Thirty-six percent of students who lived on-campus reported that they were involved with school clubs compared to 11.9 percent of students who lived off-campus and 8.4 percent of students who lived with their parents. Twenty-four percent of students who lived on campus reported that they experienced school sports compared to 6 percent of students.
who lived off-campus and 5 percent of students who lived with their parents. Students who lived on campus participated in college experiences much more often than their counterparts who lived off-campus or with their parents, not including the opportunities provided routinely by residence hall staff.

Residence hall staff produce annual programs and initiatives geared toward helping students who live in residence halls acclimate to, and get involved in, the college and the campus community, thereby creating a sense of belonging to the institution (Johnson et al., 2007). In fact, programming models, residence hall leadership organizations, and living-learning communities exist to promote student engagement and satisfaction (Blimling, 1993). Clearly, a significant emphasis exists on the co-curricular engagement of students who live in residence halls because (a) budgets are allocated for explicit purposes of programming, leadership, and faculty engagement and (b) similar budgets are not allocated for similarly focused engagement with students who commute. The result illustrates that colleges and universities place a stronger emphasis on students who live in residence halls rather than students who commute. As such, students who live in residence halls maintain social and educational advantages that aid in their persistence through higher education (Astin, 1993; Blimling; Pascarella et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With this notion in mind, the question exists whether all college students have equal opportunity to live in residence halls and benefit from those advantages.

Students who are first-generation are more likely to live at home, leaving them bereft of the advantages inherent from living in residence halls (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Bozick, 2007). Low-income students, with which first-generation status intersects, save
themselves 53 percent of their total cost of a college education with this decision (Bozick), but the result can arguably yield more consequences. The loss of opportunity to become involved in the institution and find a sense of belonging may lead to attrition, a notion that not only negatively impacts the students, but the institution as well.

**Purpose of the Study**

Significant research illustrates the positive influence getting involved and feeling a sense of belonging has on students’ likelihood to persist in college, including the ways in which living in residence halls affects those outcomes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who are first-generation exist at an economic disadvantage to find time to get involved or live in residence halls because they must work part-time jobs to afford basic cost of attendance and therefore, often choose not to get involved or live in residence halls to save money (Bozick, 2007). As a result, their academic and social disadvantages are heightened because they cannot access opportunities such as clubs and organizations and living in residence halls that provide convenient and regular opportunities that would lead to a sense of institutional belonging. This *double-pane window* impedes persistence and retention for students who are first-generation on two fronts – access to college and access to opportunities that support persistence. If they face barriers to involvement, belonging, and accessing living in residence halls, then providing support mechanisms for this population to only gain entry to colleges and universities is not enough. Colleges and universities should do more to make access to these opportunities equitable for all student populations. Solutions cannot be identified to enable equitable access to these opportunities; however, until the problem is examined. The purpose of this study was to compare experiences related to
educational involvement and experiences related to belonging between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-generation and examine how living in residence halls influences those outcomes. The questions guiding this research were:

1. Do students who are first-generation experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation?
2. Do students who are first-generation experience educational involvement living in residence halls at the same rate as students who are not first-generation?

**Operational Definitions**

In order to understand this study, the reader must possess a rudimentary knowledge of terms and concepts associated with the study. First, the population under study, students who are first-generation, will be reviewed. Second, educational involvement and belonging will be explained.

*Students who are First-Generation:* Students who are first-generation are defined differently throughout the literature (Chen, 2005; Choy et al., 2000; Engle, 2007; Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Inkelas et al., 2007). Many authors use the term to reflect students whose parents did attend college, but did not earn a college degree (Choy, et al.; Engle; Gibbons & Borders; Inkelas et al.). Others define the population as students whose parents did not attend college (Chen). The former definition includes students whose parents may have attended college for some amount of time, whereas the latter definition provides a narrower population. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will use the former definition in order to create a larger sample population.
**Educational Involvement:** Researchers consider involvement within academic and social spectrums (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1975). Engagement with faculty or other students, living in residence halls, participation in fraternities and sororities serve as examples of involvement (Astin). For the purposes of this study, educational involvement will refer to the idea that students have goals and plans, are knowledgeable about campus resources, and are involved in the life of the university (Winston, Miller, & Cooper, 1999).

**Belonging:** Belonging has been investigated historically in the context of student retention and persistence within institutions of higher education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Tinto, 1975). Knowing that some researchers have questioned the inclusivity of higher education and the concept of belonging within higher education, this study will define belonging as an individual view of one’s inclusion within the campus community (Hurtado & Carter).

**Significance of the Study**

This study contributed to existing research on the experiences faced by students who are first-generation related to belonging and educational involvement and provide consideration on how living in residence halls influences these experiences. Research on students who are first-generation’s sense of belonging is critical because of the barriers they face and the opportunity institutions may find to improve persistence and graduation rates if they identify solutions to aid them. The influence of residence hall living may yield additional insight into other barriers and provide corresponding solutions.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students who are first-generation face barriers to success in college (Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008). These barriers begin in early childhood, continue through the college application process, and persist after they enroll and try to advance towards graduation. During college, all students are encouraged to get involved, engage with faculty and other students, and even live in residence halls (Astin, 1993). These recommendations stem from the idea that involvement and engagement related to faculty and student interaction present in clubs and organizations, social events, and residence hall environments create a stronger sense of belonging to the institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1973). A stronger sense of belonging causes stronger predictability for student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975). Despite this, students who are first-generation enter college with different resources that define their ability to participate at the same level as students who are not first-generation in these areas (Lundberg et al., 2007; Stuber, 2009) so the question exists whether these two populations experience involvement and belonging in different ways. Knowing that living in residence halls provided an enhanced set of opportunities to get involved and thereby increase sense of belonging (Berger, 1997; Longerbeam, Inkelas, & Brower, 2007), a question undergirding this study is whether living in residence halls causes any effect on the experiences of these populations. The purpose of this study was to compare experiences related to educational involvement and experiences related to belonging
between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-generation and examine how living in residence halls influences those outcomes. To that end, this chapter will provide a review of the literature related to these topics. First, the author summarizes the literature related to students who are first-generation including the barriers they face in relation to college aspiration, preparation, access, and persistence. Second, the author relates a summary of the literature on belonging and involvement as they relate to the research questions. Finally, the author provides an overview of college student housing that considers the benefits inherent in residence hall living.

**Students who are First-Generation**

As of 1996, very little research had occurred on students who are first-generation to even be able to define them as a marginalized population (Terenzini et al., 1996b). Students who are first-generation have become the focus of several studies whose themes can be categorized into three areas: (a) aspiration and preparation (Engle, Bermeo, & O’Brien, 2006; Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Terenzini et al., 1996b), (b) access and transition (Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004), and (c) persistence (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Engle & Tinto, 2008). Before we can explore the nature and scope of this population, we must first define them.

**Defining Students who are First-Generation**

Balemian and Feng (2013) defined first-generation students simply as the first person in an immediate family to attend college. All definitions of this population include this theme; however, subtleties exist based on the level of education the parents of students who are first-generation attained. For example, many researchers define them as students whose parents possess no more than a high school education (Balemian &
Feng, 2013; Engle, 2007; Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Inkelas et al., 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004). Other researchers use a more liberal definition of students who are first-generation, describing them as students whose parents never earned a Bachelor’s degree (Balemian & Feng; Engle; Stebleton & Soria, 2012). In the latter definition, the parents of students who are first-generation may have attended college for some amount of time, if even for one semester. It is difficult to ascertain which definition provides the best representation of this population, but researchers tend to agree on the characteristics and experiences these students share.

**Nature and Scope of Students who are First-Generation**

All college students whose parents never completed an undergraduate degree share commons characteristics, regardless of the amount of education their parents possess (Bui, 2002; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Hertel, 2002). Students who are first-generation are more likely to come from historically marginalized ethnic identities and low-income families than students whose parents possess college education (Engle & Tinto). In addition, they tend to be (a) older, (b) born outside the United States, (c) non-native English speakers, (d) disabled, and (e) weaker in cognitive skills areas such as reading, math, and writing (Bui; Hertel; Terenzini et al., 1996b). While not every student who is first-generation possesses all characteristics, any of those traits places them at a disadvantage compared to their continuing-generation peers.

The characteristics students who are first-generation possess typically place them at a disadvantage to their continuing-generation counterparts and make them an underrepresented population among college-going students (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Choy, 2001; Pascarella et al., 2004; Stebleton & Soria, 2012). Engle and Tinto (2008)
studied low-income students who are first-generation and found they were four times more likely to leave college after their first year than their peers. Forty-three percent of this population left college within six years compared and 60 percent of them did so within the first year. After six years, only 34% of low-income students who are first-generation earned a Bachelor’s degree compared to 66 percent of non-low-income, continuing-generation counterparts. In order to understand the dilemmas faced by students who are first-generation, one must review the traditional barriers they face in their pursuit of higher education.

**Barriers Experienced by Students who are First-Generation**

As much as students who are first-generation represent an intersection of marginalization (Museus, 2011; Levine-Rasky, 2011), the barriers they face represent an intersection of college experiences. Research on students who are first-generation circulates around the three areas of (a) aspiration and preparation, (b) access and transition, and (c) persistence because the barriers this population faces predominantly fall into those stages of their college experience (Terenzini et al., 1996b). They face barriers within these areas related largely to academics, finances, and engagement (Bozick, 2007; Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996b).

**Aspiration and Preparation.** Several studies support that students who are first-generation maintain lower aspiration for college than their continuing-generation peers (Engle, 2007; Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Terenzini et al., 1996b). Some researchers have indicated that they succumb to lower expectations about education by the time they reach the 8th grade (Engle; Gibbons & Borders). While their overall college-going expectations
were lower than those of their continuing-generation peers, Gibbons and Borders (2010) found that male students who are first-generation perceived more barriers than female students who are first-generation or male students who are continuing-generation. The same study found that female, African American students who are first-generation reported higher college-going expectations than their gender and ethnic counterparts in the continuing-generation population.

Students who are first-generation display lower levels of academic preparation (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Terenzini et al., 1996b). While 50 percent of students who are continuing-generation take algebra in the 8th grade, only one-third of students who are first-generation take the course (Balemian & Feng). Despite the importance of taking advanced math courses in high school, only two-thirds of students who are first-generation took them compared to three-fourths of their counterparts (Horn & Nunez, 2000). Throughout high school, participation and performance gaps are evident between the two groups, leading to students who are first-generation typically taking only one college entrance test compared to students who are continuing-generation who typically take both the SAT and ACT (Balemian & Feng; Terenzini et al.).

A review of aspiration and preparation barriers for students who are first-generation would not be complete without consider the impact of parents and finances. Parental guidance towards college is lacking amongst this population because parents of students who are first-generation never completed, or attended, college (Choy et al., 2005; Engle, 2007; Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Terenzini et al., 1996b). In addition, as many students who are first-generation hail from low-income areas (Engle & Tinto,
2008) and are not sought after by admissions counselors (Bozick, 2007), they lack access to information that would enable to know more about the college system (Engle).

**Access and Transition.** First-generation student barriers to college access and transition largely relate to academic and financial support. Compared to students who are continuing-generation, they are less likely to have completed key college preparation courses in high school and must take remedial courses in college (Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007). They are also more likely to enroll as part-time students (Engle & Tinto, 2008) and less likely to perceive faculty as helpful (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Financial support is a key barrier for students who are first-generation (Bozick, 2007). They are typically financial independent from their parents (Bui, 2002; Engle & Tinto, 2008). Regardless of their support from parents, financial aid is often not enough to support full cost of attendance (Bozick; Engle & Tinto). As a result, this population must work alongside of taking classes to afford cost of living and educational expenses (Engle & Tinto; Terenzini et al., 1996b). This variable affects students who are first-generation throughout their college experience.

**Persistence.** Students who are first-generation face barriers in their persistence to a college degree (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Chen, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996b). Due to the many demands on their schedule and lack of support, students who are first-generation are less likely to be engaged academically and socially (Engle & Tinto; Terenzini, et al., 1996b). The impact of working while in school results in this population taking fewer credit hours each semester, leading to lower graduation rates (Chen; Engle & Tinto; Pascarella et al.; Terenzini et al., 1996b). Students who are first-generation are more likely to attend
college closer to home and then live at home with their parents or in off-campus housing that might be more affordable than living in residence halls (Balemian & Feng; Engle & Tinto; Pascarella et al.). As a result, these students miss the social engagement opportunities inherent in living in residence halls (Astin, 1993).

**Professional Insights**

Eliminating barriers for students who are first-generation can provide solutions that impact more than just the immediate population of concern. As students who are first-generation exist within an intersection of marginalized identities, solutions that increase their aspiration and preparation, access and transition, and persistence are likely to positively support those needs for other groups (Freire, 2000; Museus, 2011). At a micro level, earning a Bachelor’s degree is the only way low-income students who are first-generation might increase their earning potential and subsequently improve the circumstances for their families and descendants (Terenzini et al., 2001). At a meso level, higher education reaps the rewards of eliminating barriers because of the potential increased retention that can lead to increased alumni support and legacy students. In addition, with a more educated populace, the nation will bear lower financial burden for poverty, unemployment, crime, and health (College Board, 2007; IHEP, 2005) allowing it to maintain a competitive edge in the global economy (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Finally, at the macro level, the elimination of barriers will benefit society because persons with Bachelor’s degrees will likely earn more money and, therefore, pay more taxes.

**Good Practices Related to Students who are First-Generation**

Parent involvement is critical across all stages of the college experience for students who are first-generation (Engle et al., 2006). Obtaining parental support is
complicated; however, strategies are needed to not only influence parents of these students, but the students directly. Engle and Tinto (2008) claim efforts focused in aspiration and preparation, access and transition, and persistence will reap the greatest gains to positively affect students who are first-generation.

**Practices That Aid Aspiration and Preparation.** Several initiatives exist that exhibit positive influences on first-generation student aspiration and preparation (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The federal government funds Talent Search and Upward Bound initiatives under the umbrella of TRIO Programs, as well as GEAR UP programs (Bragg et al., 2006; Engle, 2007). These programs provide pre-college preparation assistance through workshops, tutoring, mentoring, and counseling that assist with career exploration and financial preparation (Engle et al., 2006; Engle). These programs reinforce aspiration by helping students in grades as early as middle school begin to think that college is a realistic achievement for them. Campus-based initiatives such as college tours, overnight visits hosted by a current college student allow these students to picture themselves in the environment (Engle et al.).

**Practices that Assist Access and Transition.** Researchers suggest that the effective support of college transition will aid students who are first-generation and that the first-year of their college experience is the most critical (Engle, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). First, Bridge programs provide opportunities for entering college students to take college courses and live in residence halls during summer terms to help them make a smooth transition into college (Terenzini et al., 1996b). Second, learning communities provide evidence of success by creating classroom environments where students who are first-generation are able to take courses
with each other (Engstrom & Tinto; Stebleton & Soria, 2012). These environments create systems of support that allow students who are first-generation to take risks, share failures and successes, and increased their confidence overall (Engstrom & Tinto; Stebleton & Soria). Finally, it is important to offer enough financial support that will allow these students to focus on academic and social engagement more than work (Engle & Tinto).

**Practices That Assist Persistence.** In order to positively impact persistence, it is important to get students who are first-generation engaged in their college experience (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Inkelas et al., 2007). Some opportunities, such as living in residence halls, are difficult to achieve, but others like increased work-study options offer no additional cost to the student (Engle & Tinto, Inkelas et al.). The TRIO initiative known as The Student Support Services Programs provides several positive outcomes including structured first-year experiences, emphasis on academic support, active advising, participation plans, and visibility on their respective campuses (Engle & Tinto). Regardless of which option students choose to participate in, research supports that all students benefit from campus involvement (Astin, 1993; Inkelas et al., 2007; Tinto, 1975; Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013).

**Involvement**

Students who are more involved on campus are more likely to persist (Astin, 1993; Inkelas et al., 2007; Tinto, 1975; Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013). Involvement in the college experience can take on many forms such as participation in fraternities and sororities, working on campus, engagement with faculty and student peers, and living in residence halls (Astin). Astin found positive correlations between student satisfaction
and (a) academic involvement, (b) involvement with faculty, (c) involvement with student peers through experiences such as intramural sports, group projects, and leadership positions, and (d) part-time employment on campus. While Astin argued that involvement originates from student effort, what if a student cannot make the effort due to barriers beyond his control? As previously stated, students who are first-generation face barriers to involvement because they are more likely to live at home (Balemian & Feng, 2013), work (Bozick, 2007), and have family demands (Engle, 2007) thereby limiting their access to these opportunities. Wang and Kennedy-Phillips found students who are first-generation may have stronger academic motivation, but were less involved with their peers. Their study affirmed prior research, but did not look at the intersection of generation status and living on campus.

Students who live in residence halls are more likely to be involved (Astin, 1993; Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013) due to the increased access to these opportunities and students who are first-generation benefit significantly from involvement, but they are less likely to participate (Lundberg et al., 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004; Wang & Kennedy-Phillips). Lundberg et al. found that structured involvement opportunities might be more impactful than unstructured opportunities; yet living in residence halls provides both. While research indicates that commuter students who are first-generation have fewer opportunities to get involved (Astin, Lundberg et al.), what are the experiences of residential students who are first-generation who theoretically have easy access to them? Inkelas et al. (2007) found that involvement in living-learning programs supported the persistence of students who are first-generation more than involvement in traditional residence hall programs, but support existed nonetheless for both groups. Involvement in
the campus experience helps establish a sense of belonging that is critical to the persistence of any college student (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983).

**Belonging**

Several researchers have examined the concept of belonging in the context of higher education (Berger & Milem, 1999; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Stebleton et al., 2014a; Tinto, 1975). Belonging is defined in several ways, but arguably, one of the more inclusive definitions reinforces that a sense of belonging is an individual view of one’s inclusion within a campus community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Pascarella & Terenzini (1983) found what occurs to students after they arrive on campus matters more than their background in relation to persistence; however, some researchers argue that while living on campus has a positive impact on sense of belonging (Berger & Milem), differences may exist for marginalized populations (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007). The intersectionality of students who are first-generation with marginalized identities reinforces a need to examine this further.

Belonging can be examined in several ways, but for the purpose of this study three areas will be reviewed because they relate directly to how belonging will be measured. Each of these areas involves student experiences or decision-making while enrolled in college: (a) social integration, (b) academic integration, and (c) commitment. These areas have been shown to directly correlate to persistence and withdrawal behaviors (Berger & Milem, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Tinto, 1975).
Social Integration

Social integration culminates positively or negatively based on the experiences students have with their peers. Their interactions with peers can occur individually or within groups and in informal or formal settings such as residence halls, clubs and organizations, or recreational activities. Berger and Milem (1999) argue that early engagement with peers leads to feelings of social support and ultimately positive persistence behaviors. Some populations may not be as likely to integrate socially within the institution. Soria and Stebleton (2013) and Rubin (2012) cite that when compared with middle-class students, working-class students participated in fewer formal and informal social activities. Other studies substantiate the fact that barriers to social integration exist for many underrepresented populations (Hertel, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007). While Stebleton, Soria, Huesman, & Torres (2014b) indicate that peer interactions are a stronger predictor of belonging, Berger and Milem claim that engagement with faculty can actually provide support for students who are not finding positive social integration.

Academic Integration

Academic integration relates to how well a student performs academically in college. Researchers have linked this outcome to student motivation (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012), but some have found a greater correlation between academic integration and students’ perception of (a) encouragement of student participation and faculty interaction and (b) a caring relationship with faculty (Freeman, Andermann, & Jensen, 2007). Freeman et al. also found a strong correlation between academic integration and students’ feelings of self-efficacy.
Collier and Morgan (2008) found that student preparedness for academic work was linked to two paths, both of which contributed to student academic success. One path involved students’ academic ability, which predetermined their ability to succeed in the classroom. The other path referred to the students’ ability to understand their role as a student whereby they comprehend and appropriately engage faculty expectations. Similar to work involving barriers to social integration, the study found that students who are first generation lacked the cultural capital to intrinsically understand this student role; thereby placing them at a disadvantage in their ability to integrate academically to the institution. Some researchers have found that when they do understand this role; however, they can perform better than their continuing-generation counterparts (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Commitment

Commitment refers to the affinity a student feels to an institution as well as the level in which a student feels a commitment to the goal of graduating from that institutional. Tinto (1975) argued that despite their background characteristics it is the levels of social and academic integration a student experiences that will directly translate to the level of institutional and goal commitment they possess. Students’ decision to persist at the institution will reflect on their feelings of commitment. The greater commitment they feel, the less likely they are to leave the institution. Berger and Milem (1999) found that students who share similar values to what are dominant in the college’s culture are more likely to persist, but also claimed that background characteristics, such as high school academic achievement and family income, do play a significant role.
Hurtado and Carter (1997) support the notion that unrealized barriers to institutional and goal commitment might exist.

Several researchers attribute student retention and attrition concerns to issues of belonging (Berger & Milem, 1999; O’Keeffe, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). They substantiate that involvement and engagement create increased belonging, but what happens to a population, such as students who are first-generation, that already struggles with basic opportunities to engage because their family and work obligations take precedent? In their study of six large public research institutions, Stebleton et al. (2014a) cited students who are first-generation have lower ratings of sense of belonging than students who are not first-generation. Further, they noted that one reason for this instance could be students who are first-generation are more likely to live off campus and commute from home. Hurtado and Carter (1997) indicated students who live in residence halls are more likely to find a sense of belonging to the institution so the ability for students who are first-generation to find belonging, and thereby persist, within college and universities must be examined within the context of residence hall living and whether it positively or negatively influences this variable. While students who are first-generation live in residence halls in fewer numbers than students who are not first-generation, some research showed that doing so could enable their persistence, particularly when connected to a living-learning community (Inkelas et al., 2007).

Living in Residence Halls

College student housing, which provides a catalyst for involvement and belonging, serves two key distinct roles on any college campus (Riker & DeCoster, 2008). First, it serves a business function allowing revenue to flow into the institution to
support it directly or indirectly depending on the type of institution. Second, it provides an educational function so that students who live in residence halls engage socially and academically in and out of classroom settings. The nature of many college student-housing programs is that they marry the business and educational needs of the institution into an experience that benefits the students who access them (Riker & DeCoster).

Within this section, the author provides a synopsis of living in residence halls. First, a condensed history of residence halls will be offered. Second, the author guides the reader through an overview of residence hall frameworks on facilities, staffing, and programming. Third, the author describes the benefits of living in residence halls and how they support student persistence and retention.

**History of Residence Halls**

The origin of residence halls dates back to the Oxford-Cambridge model where students shared living quarters with faculty to create a holistic learning system (Blattner et al., 2013). After the Civil War, the emphasis on construction and living in residence halls decreased as the perceived value of the concept diminished; however, interest resurfaced in the 19th century. Within renewed interest, The Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862 provided financial support and land to states for the establishment of 69 colleges that would include the construction of residence halls. The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, commonly known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, increased college access for World War II veterans and between 1944 and 1950 other legislation such as the Surplus Property Act and amendments to the Lanham Act made provisions for colleges to increase student housing to support the enrollment influx. During the 1960s, civil rights legislation changed how room assignments were conducted, how staff were hired, and
how programming was sought to create awareness and comfort. Other legislation in the
1960s encouraged construction of new high-rise student housing on college campuses as
the need to support greater numbers outweighed the desire to maintain the Oxford-
Cambridge model of holistic learning. During the 1980s, interest renewed in that holistic
model and the concept of learning communities was introduced. Since then, colleges
have diversified their residence hall offerings by including more support for modern
technology and design, sustainability, and specialized communities for affinity groups
such as gay, lesbian, and transgender students, students with disabilities, and veterans to
name a few (Blattner et al.; La Roche, Flanigan, & Copeland, 2010; Trinklein, 2009).

Frameworks of Residence Hall Living

In this section, the author provides an overview of the key elements the reader
should know to possess a basic understanding of how residence halls and residence hall
living is structured. First, the author presents the types of residence hall facilities and
trends that dominate the landscape of college student housing. Second, the author
outlines a concise framework of residence hall staffing models. Third, the author
summarizes the nature of residence hall programming.

Residence Hall Facilities. A recent study by the Association for Higher
Education Facilities Professionals (APPA) found that prospective students ranked
residence halls as the second most important facility influencing their choice of a college
(LaRoche et al., 2010). Historically, colleges designed residence halls in the traditional
model where they were densely populated, with double and single rooms that existed off
one central corridor, with large common bathrooms for all of the occupants to share
(Rodger & Johnson, 2005). As student desires changed, colleges adjusted their designs
towards suite-style residence halls that comprised self-contained living units that housed smaller groups of students in two to four single or double bedrooms sharing a bathroom and other common space such as a living room or kitchen (Rodger & Johnson). In the late 20th century, apartment-style housing that provided single bedrooms, private bathrooms, full kitchens, and laundry rooms within the unit became more prevalent (Rodger & Johnson).

In the 21st century, colleges have expanded residence hall amenities to compensate for the demands on modern students. With the advent and normalization of new technologies such as mobile phones, gaming consoles, iPods, and personal computers, colleges design residence halls so students have the ability to utilize their devices easily and regularly (LaRoche et al., 2010). Illustrating the demand of apartment-style housing and evolution of technological demands, LaRoche et al. found that the top ten amenities desired by students were private bedrooms, onsite parking, double beds, onsite laundry facilities, internet access, proximity to campus, fitness centers, private bathrooms, cable television, and satellite dining.

Student interest has encouraged colleges to construct environmentally friendly residence halls as well (Trinklein, 2009). “Sustainable” residence halls include a variety of amenities that not only lessen the impact on the environment, but also educate students about energy conversation (Trinklein). Examples of sustainable amenities include dual flush valves, low flow shower heads, water-saving faucets, certified wood, occupancy sensors that adjust lighting based on whether person is in a space, and bamboo floor.

**Residence Hall Staffing.** Residence hall staffing models exists to support residence hall management and life. Similar to corporate management organizations,
residence hall staffing models maintain few personnel in senior-level positions, such as directors of residence life, and mid-level positions, such as associate or assistant directors of residence life (Hovarth & Stack, 2013). While these positions serve a vital role in residence hall staffing frameworks, they are often disconnected from routine student interactions.

The predominant positions found in residence hall staffing models and those working routinely with students, are hall directors and resident assistants (Hovarth & Stack, 2013). Colleges typically employ hall directors as entry-level employees within housing and residence life departments. They fulfill a variety of functions such as supervising student staff typically referred to as resident assistants, reviewing conduct cases, and serving in an on-call rotation to respond to emergency and crisis situations. In addition, hall directors advise student staff on programming initiatives and residence hall student organizations sometimes referred to as hall councils or community councils. While hall directors are seen as entry-level residence hall staff within college personnel frameworks, resident assistants are typically known as the entry-level staff within residence hall staffing models.

Resident assistants, or resident advisors as they are known as in some residence hall staffing frameworks, are the primary point of contact between students who live in residence halls and college administration (Blimling, 2003). The role of resident assistant has existed for decades and over time has shifted from that of a disciplinarian to advisor and programmer (Blimling; Upcraft & Pilato, 1982). Similar to the hall directors that supervise them, resident assistants consistently fulfill core functions across most
Residence hall staffing models such as emergency response, conflict resolution, policy enforcement, and social and educational programming (Hovarth & Stack, 2013).

**Residence Hall Programming.** Residence hall staff provide a number of services, but arguably the most important one is programming. They sponsor a number of social and educational programs throughout the academic year to foster individual and community growth (Kennedy, 2013). Entry-level residence hall staff implement the variety of programming models that exist throughout residence hall frameworks across the country that include, but at not limited to (a) group formation, (b) community building, (c) health and wellness, and (d) residential curriculum (Kennedy).

**Benefits of Living in Residence Halls**

Colleges develop residence halls because they know they enhance student retention efforts (Astin, 1975; Astin, 1993). Despite the origins of residence halls dating back over a century ago, research on its impact on student retention and persistence only dates back to the 1960s (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1982). Since that time, several researchers have substantiated that living in residence halls supports student retention and persistence (Astin, 1975; Astin, 1993; Berger, 1997; Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Longerbeam et al., 2007; Pascarella et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996a; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1982). In fact, Astin (1993) found that the environmental variable providing the most positive impact on overall student satisfaction in college was leaving home to attend college.

Several variables key to retention and persistence exist in residence hall living (Astin, 1993). Academic success is vital to ensure students persist and graduate. Students who live in residence halls typically earn better grades, have more routine and
quality engagement with faculty, and graduate at higher rates (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Studies by Frazier and Eighmy (2012) and Longerbeam et al. (2007) described how living-learning programs found in residence halls enhance opportunities for faculty interaction and engagement beyond what simply living in a residence hall provides.

Students who live in residence halls display increased cognitive skills (Pascarella et al., 1992). Pascarella et al. found that students who live in residence halls are known to gain more critical thinking skills in college than commuter students when controls for precollege cognitive level, academic motivation, age, work responsibilities, and number of first-year credit hours taken are used. Students who live in residence halls realize greater learning outcomes related to cultural and intellectual values, self-esteem, independence, and responsibility, even when researchers control for variables on socioeconomic status, gender, race, and academic ability (Pascarella et al.). Perhaps a result of the exposure to diverse communities that living in residence hall provides, students maintain more positive and inclusive views about diversity than students who live off campus and can be more selective about who they choose to live around (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Living in residence halls involves routine interaction with students. Terenzini et al., (1996a) indicate that increased socialization and opportunities for involvement are significant benefits to residence hall living. Increased socialization leads to increased involvement in campus activities (Astin, 1993; Blimling, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), which relates to increased sense of belonging (Berger & Milem, 1999). As student-student interaction, belonging, and involvement are positively associated with
students’ willingness to reenroll at the college, residence hall living becomes a significant factor for institutional retention (Astin, 1993; Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1993).

Summary

The intent of this study is to compare experiences related to educational involvement and experiences related to belonging between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-generation and examine how living in residence halls influences those outcomes. Students who are continuing-generation possess opportunities that enhance their ability to persist and graduate, but students who are first-generation with little or no family history in higher education realize significant barriers throughout their educational careers that may place them at a distinct educational disadvantage to experiencing involvement and belonging. In the next chapter, the author will outline the methodology used in this study, including participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis protocols.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to compare experiences related to educational involvement and experiences related to belonging between students who are first-generation and students who are not first-generation and examine how living in residence halls influenced those outcomes. To do so, the researcher conducted a quantitative study in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. This chapter provides an overview of the participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis protocols that were used in this study. The researcher intended to use these methods to answer the following research questions:

1. Do students who are first-generation experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation?
2. Do students who are first-generation experience educational involvement living in residence halls at the same rate as students who are not first-generation?

Participants

The target population for this study was degree-seeking, first-time, first-year students. A convenience sample was selected from a mid-sized, comprehensive, four-year public university located in the southeastern United States. As the two research questions in this study sought to compare data between students who are first-generation and students who are not first-generation, the sample consisted of students who self-identify as the first in their families to attend college and students who do not identify as
the first in their families to attend college. To achieve this, the researcher utilized a single stage, stratified random sampling design (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) and used two determinants to distinguish the population. In addition, as the institution maintained two campuses, the sample included students enrolled at both campuses.

The researcher chose the institution as the site for this study because the researcher maintains an administrative position that provided access to data and familiarity with the site. As of spring 2015, the institution maintained an enrollment of approximately 31,000 students across two distinct campuses located 10 miles apart (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2015a). For the purposes of the study, the larger of the two campuses was identified as the Kennesaw Campus, while the smaller of the two campuses was identified as the Marietta Campus. The Kennesaw Campus enrolled 24,399 students during the spring 2015 term and the Marietta Campus enrolled 6,489 students (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia). Both campuses were predominantly White, 60.8 percent and 52.3 percent for the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus respectively; however, institutional data indicated that the Kennesaw Campus was experiencing increasing levels of ethnic diversity (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia). As of spring 2015, the Kennesaw Campus enrolled more female students (58 percent) than male students (42 percent), a trend that had been consistent for many years while the Marietta Campus enrolled more male students (79 percent) than female students (21 percent) (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia). The institution enrolled students whose permanent address was within close proximity to the institution. According to institutional data
from fall 2012, 35.8 percent of the Kennesaw Campus’ student body and 22.3 percent of the Marietta Campus’ student body originated from the same county in which the institution was located (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2011). Institutional characteristics coinciding with (a) academic offerings, (b) enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, (c) co-curricular opportunities, and (d) residence hall options related to this study in notable ways.

Academic Offerings. Both campuses possessed degree-seeking programs at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels, but the types of programs they offered are very different. The Kennesaw Campus hosted academic programs that are more focused on traditional liberal arts education such as education, business, arts, humanities and social sciences, and health and human services (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2014). The Marietta Campus maintained academic offerings centered more on STEM fields of study such as architecture and construction management, computing and software engineering, and engineering and engineering technology (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia).

Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates. Despite maintaining one of the highest enrollments in its state, the institution possessed low retention rates (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2015b; Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2015c). Based on the Fall 2011 cohort, the Kennesaw Campus experienced a 76 percent first-year retention rate while the Marietta Campus witnessed a 75 percent first-year retention rate (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2015b). In the same state, the universities that possessed the first and second-highest enrollments experienced 92 percent and 93 percent first-year retention rates.
respectively. The institution’s six-year graduation rate for traditional-aged undergraduate students was 42 percent on the Kennesaw Campus and 37 percent on the Marietta Campus, compared to 84 percent at the first and 81 percent at the second-highest enrolling universities in the state (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2015c).

While the institution historically enrolled a non-traditional student population on the Kennesaw Campus, it enrolled higher numbers of traditional students since the introduction of on-campus housing (Fact book 2012-2013). Despite this, institutional data on retention, progression, and graduation illustrated that while most first-time, full-time, first-year students at the Kennesaw Campus matriculated as traditional students they quickly exhibited characteristics of non-traditional students such as adjusting to part-time status, working more than 20 hours per week, or stopping out (Fact book 2012-2013). For example, part-time undergraduate enrollment increased within a five-year span while the full-time undergraduate rate slowed. In addition, during the 2012-2013 academic year, the Kennesaw Campus enrolled 5,254 first-year students during the Fall 2012 semester, but only 3,873 of them during the subsequent Spring 2013 semester.

Co-Curricular Opportunities. The institution provided co-curricular opportunities related to athletics, recreation, arts and culture, and student organizations. The Kennesaw Campus maintained over 200 student organizations (Fact book 2012-2013) while the Marietta Campus possessed approximately 120 (Fact book 2012, 2013). Student organizations that focus on the residence hall experience also existed at each campus. Community councils focused on student advocacy and event planning and existed in each residence hall community. The Residence Hall Association acted as an
umbrella organization for the community councils and fulfilled a similar mission except on a larger scale. Finally, an honor society named the National Residence Hall Honorary existed to provide students who live in residence halls an opportunity for community service, but this only existed on the Kennesaw Campus at the time of this study. Access to the National Residence Hall Honorary was limited based on grade point average and involvement.

**Residence Halls.** The institution maintained comprehensive on-campus housing programs on both campuses. The Kennesaw Campus created its on-campus housing program in 2002 and maintained a housing capacity of 3,497 beds at the time of this study. As such, the Kennesaw Campus was 14 percent residential. The on-campus housing program on the Kennesaw Campus had four distinct residential communities located on the northern and southern perimeters of its campus. The housing inventory included suite and apartment-style units and all students who lived on campus had single bedrooms within those units. Due to the quantity of apartment-style units, most first-year students who chose to live on-campus resided in apartments. The housing inventory was segregated by year in school with first-year students predominantly residing with other first-year students and upper-class students residing with other upper-class students. Unlike housing programs at other institutions, students on the Kennesaw Campus were able to select their room assignments in a manner similar to reserving a room on an airplane. Once accepted to the institution, students were provided a username and password that allowed them to log in to the housing portal and select a room. The only institution-imposed restriction that existed on students’ ability to select a room was their classification because some of the inventory was reserved for first-year students, some
for upper-class students, and some for students wishing to participate in theme-based housing communities.

The Marietta Campus had offered on-campus housing since 1964 (Fact book 2012, 2013). This campus provided four residence hall options in the form of traditional, suite, and apartment-style units for a total capacity of 1,714 beds, making the Marietta Campus 26 percent residential. Similar to the Kennesaw Campus, the housing inventory on the Marietta Campus was segregated by year in school. At the time of this study, students entering the campus as first-year students were required to apply for housing space and then assigned to a room. Upperclass students were able to self-select their rooms during the annual housing selection process for the succeeding academic year. Perhaps the largest distinction between the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus related to housing was that the latter maintained a requirement that all first-year students must live in residence halls unless they chose to reside at home with their parents.

The residence hall options on both campuses provided live-in residence life staff on each floor or in each building depending on the structure of the residence hall community. Resident assistants served as the primary resource for students and were supervised by residence hall directors. At the beginning of each fall and spring academic term, the resident assistants organized meetings for the members of their assigned community. The resident assistants provided social and educational programming on a routine schedule to the students who lived in residence halls, primarily focusing on the students in their immediate area of responsibility. In addition to the programming provided by the resident assistants, the residence life staff also sponsored a number of
routine large-scale events coordinated by its personnel or the student organizations it supported.

**Instruments**

This study incorporated three groups of items into a questionnaire that was sent to participants. First, a series of demographic questions was included to provide descriptive statistics. The second group of items stemmed from the Institutional Integration Scale (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). A subtask of the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (Winston, Miller, & Cooper, 1999) comprised the third group of items. As the researcher planned to combine existing instruments for this study, he addressed validity and reliability of the combined instrument again during data analysis (Creswell, 2009).

**Demographics**

The questionnaire included ten questions to collect demographic information about the participants. Sex was collected as a categorical variable and participants were able to select female, male or other. Ethnicity was collected as a categorical variable as well with options that included African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Native American, and Other. Participants were asked to report their current age as a categorical variable, choosing between Less than 18, 18-24, and 25 or older. Employment was factored as three categorical variables and requested within three questions. The first asked whether the participant was employed with a Yes or No option for response. The second asked where the participants was employed whether On-Campus, Off-Campus, or Both. The third asked how many hours the participants worked per week and provided six response
options including Less than 5, 5 – 10, 11 – 20, 21 – 30, 31 – 40, and More than 40. The questionnaire asked participants to report the amount of credit hours they were taking during the current semester as an interval level variable. Participants were asked which forms of financial aid they received and had the option to indicate Yes or No to Military benefits, Work-Study, Pell Grant, Need-based grants or scholarships, and Merit-based grants or scholarships. The last three demographic questions on the questionnaire requested information related to generation status and residence hall experience. Participants were asked to indicate whether they were the first person in their immediate family to attend college with a categorical response option of Yes and No. Then, they were asked to report whether they had lived in any campus residential facility. Options for the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus were provided. The responses were collected as a categorical variable of Yes or No. If the participant selected No, the final demographic question solicited the primary reason the participant did not live in a residential facility. Categorical options included Cannot Afford It, Inconvenient, Not eligible, Lack of information about them, Lack of parent encouragement to do it, Responsibility to my family, Did not find it important to my college career, and Did not think I would meet people like me.

**Institutional Integration Scale**

The Institutional Integration Scale was developed by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) based on Tinto’s (1975) theoretical framework on student retention. They designed the scale to assess students’ self-reported levels of social and academic integration and institutional commitment (Tinto). It included 30 items with 5 subscales that correspond to the dimensions identified by Tinto and assessed (a) peer-group
interactions, (b) interactions with faculty, (c) faculty concern for student development and teaching, (d) academic and intellectual development, and (e) institutional and goal commitment (Pascarella & Terenzini). For this study, the scale addressed the first research question related to how living in residence halls influenced participant’s sense of belonging to the institution.

Pascarella and Terenzini’s (1980) original study substantiated the validity of the Institutional Integration Scale to support Tinto’s model and to assess belonging. They performed a simple random sample of 1,905 students about their expectations of various parts of the college experience, controlling for participants’ levels of involvement on campus and their parent’s educational levels among other characteristics. The study illustrated general support for predictive validity of Tinto’s dimensions. Pascarella and Terenzini noted that the scales could be used to develop a predictive equation to identify those students who are more likely to leave school, but did offer caution in that regard. Other researchers have used the Institutional Integration Scale in its original, or a modified form, for their own purposes (French & Oakes, 2004; Reid, 2013).

**Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment**

Winston et al. (1999) developed the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) based on the work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) and the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1987) and the Student Developmental Task Inventory II (Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979), which serve as the instrument’s precursors. Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted that students’ progress through a series of seven developmental stages, or vectors, including (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy
toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity. Winston et al. (1999) formulated developmental tasks based on these vectors and created the SDTLA as a means to assess their implication within a college student population. The developers defined a developmental task as “an interrelated set of behaviors and attitudes that the culture specifies should be exhibited at approximately the same chronological time of life by age cohorts in a designated context” (Winston et al., p. 5).

The SDTLA comprises three developmental tasks that directly correlate to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors: (a) Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, (b) Developing Autonomy, and (c) Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships and two scales: (a) Salubrious Lifestyle and (b) Response Bias (Winston et al., 1999). Each developmental task is subdivided into subtasks. For the purposes of this study, the researcher utilized the Educational Involvement Subtask (EI) that is part of the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task (PUR). This subtask focuses on whether students have defined educational goals and plans, are knowledgeable about available resources, and are actively involved in the academic life of the university (Winston et al., 1999). It has congruence with the ideas Astin (1993), Pascarella and Terenzini (1980), and Tinto (1975) promoted regarding academic and social integration; therefore, it provided an effective instrument to measure participant’s educational involvement in the institution. During the initial assessment of the SDTLA, Winston et al. used six scales to determine the validity of the Educational and Clarifying Purpose Task and subtasks. The instrument was tested for reliability using test-retest and internal consistency methods (Winston et al.).
Data Collection

This research took a causal-comparative survey approach because the purpose was to take a sample of the population in question and generalize the findings of the research so that inferences can be made about the experience they have related to belonging and educational involvement and how living in residence halls had an influence (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The survey used self-administered questionnaires distributed through an online survey tool. This approach was used to provide an opportunity to collect data quickly and at little cost to the researcher or the research site. Upon approval of the research proposal, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at the education institution and the research site. In preparation for the study, the researcher transferred the questionnaire to Qualtrix. The researcher used the same instruments, but distributed them to the Kennesaw Campus and to the Marietta Campus through a separate process.

The researcher obtained a report of students at the institution who are (a) enrolled, (b) degree-seeking, and (c) classified as first-time, first-year students. The report included 5,341 persons matching the criteria - 4,381 from the Kennesaw Campus and 960 from the Marietta Campus. The researcher sought a stratified, random sample of 1000 participants divided into four groups (a) Kennesaw Campus - First Generation, (b) Kennesaw Campus - Continuing Generation, (c) Marietta Campus - First Generation, and (d) Marietta Campus - Continuing Generation. The researcher divided the persons on the list into the four groups using Microsoft Excel. Kennesaw Campus – First Generation participants made up 14 percent of the list while Kennesaw Campus – Continuing Generation, Marietta Campus – First Generation, and Marietta Campus – Continuing
Generation made up 68, 4, and 14 percent of the report respectively. Sample sizes were created by multiplying the number of persons in each of the four groups by the percentage of the population they comprised (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This data, and the final sample sizes for each of the four groups are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

**Summary of Stratified Sample Creation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratified Group</th>
<th>Number of Persons on Report</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Students Initially Contacted</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kennesaw Campus – First Generation</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennesaw Campus – Continuing Generation</td>
<td>3638</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marietta Campus – First Generation</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marietta Campus – Continuing Generation</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher used Microsoft Excel to randomize the persons within each group and the sample sizes to identify the persons that would be used in the study. The researcher sent out invitations to participate in the study using a web link collector to the 1,000 persons identified in the sample. Separate invitations were sent to the Kennesaw Campus sample and the Marietta Campus sample because the web links were unique to each campus. One week later, the researcher sent out a reminder notification to the sample to request their participation and a final notification was sent a week afterwards.

After reviewing the early response rate from the first invitation to participate, the researcher decided to send out an invitation to participate to another sample of 1,000
persons. These persons were identified using the same four groups as the first sample. Since the persons identified in the groups were already randomized, the researcher selected the next set of persons according to the appropriate sample sizes. Once the deadline was reached with each sample, the survey was closed to prevent further responses. Participants were not linked to their responses allowing for anonymity in the study.

**Data Analysis**

This study addressed two research questions that considered different independent and dependent variables. The independent variables involved in this study were categorical while the dependent variables were continuous. As such, the researcher employed a t-test or analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique for inferential statistical analysis based on the demographic responses (Creswell, 2009; Gamst, Meyers, & Guarino, 2008). The researcher employed a one-way, between-subjects design that allowed the researcher to examine the interaction of the independent variable in the study, generation status, and the dependent variables illustrated by the participants scores on the instruments (Gamst et al.).

Several variables were considered in this analysis. The independent variable in this study was generation status. Generation status defined the participant group who identified as first-generation and the participant group who was continuing-generation. This independent variable was used in the design to assess whether it creates an effect on the dependent variables (Gamst et al., 2008).

The one-way between-subjects analysis addressed each research question. The analysis addressed the first research question, “Do students who are first-generation
experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation,” by considering the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable derived from the participant scores on the Institutional Integration Scale. The analysis addressed the second research question, “Do students who are first-generation experience educational involvement living in residence halls at the same rate as students who are not first-generation,” by considering the effect of the independent variable on the participant scores on the SDTLA scale. The researcher used responses to the demographic questions, such as whether the participant lives in residence halls, to examine whether they possess any influence on the dependent variables.

The researcher used IBM SPSS software to conduct the analyses. Part of the analyses included considerations for the three assumptions embedded within ANOVA. The first assumption, that the errors associated with the scores from the dependent variable are independent from each other, was accounted for using a .05 alpha level. The researcher reviewed the histograms to account for the second assumption, that errors are normally distributed. The third assumption, variances across the levels of the independent variable are equal, was accounted for with a Levene test for homogeneity of variance (Gamst et al., 2008).

**Summary**

The intent of this study was to examine the experiences of students who are first-generation related to belonging and educational involvement and how living in residence halls influences those experiences. Little research has been conducted in the intersection of these topics; therefore, this study provided an opportunity to add depth to understanding students who are first-generation in these areas. A quantitative research
design was utilized to increase generalizability of the findings with the use of an online questionnaire to collect data quickly and with little cost. Two sample populations of 1,000 participants were drawn from enrollment data at the institution chosen as the site for the study based on these characteristics: (a) enrolled, (b) degree-seeking, and (c) first-time, first-year students. The questionnaire included a section for demographic questions and the two instruments being used in this study. The Institutional Integration Scale was used for examine the construct of belonging and a subtask of the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment was used to examine the construct of educational involvement. The researcher utilized IBM SPSS software to analyze the collected data using a t-test or ANOVA for inferential statistics on the demographic responses and one-way between-subjects analysis for responses on the Institutional Integration Scale and Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to compare experiences related to belonging and experiences related to educational involvement between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-generation and to examine how living in residence halls influenced those outcomes. This chapter presents an overview of the data collection results and a description of the steps the researcher took to prepare the data for analysis. Next, a description of the sample is included with the results of descriptive statistics on the respondent demographics. Finally, the findings of the data analysis is provided including the results of the reliability tests and descriptive statistics on the instrument scales, as well as the results of the data analysis as it related to the research questions.

Data Collection Results

The researcher sent invitations to participate in the study to a total of 2,000 potential participants. An initial distribution to a sample of 1,000 participants was sent, but a second distribution to a second sample of 1,000 participants was necessary due to low response rate in the first group. The two distributions were scheduled two weeks apart from one another and each lasted three weeks. There were 820 potential participants from the Kennesaw Campus and 180 potential participants from the Marietta Campus with each sample stratified to meet the sampling goal of the study; potential participants who self-identified as first-generation or continuing-generation in their enrollment record. The invitations yielded a total of 116 persons, 92 from the Kennesaw
Campus and 24 from the Marietta Campus, who attempted to complete the online questionnaire in Qualtrics. Of those participants, only 64 from the Kennesaw Campus and 17 from the Marietta Campus were included in the data analysis. Those excluded from the original 116 group did not complete the entire of the survey. The final sample from the Kennesaw Campus included 28 participants who self-identified as first-generation and 36 participants who self-identified as continuing-generation. The final sample from the Marietta Campus included 12 participants who self-identified as first-generation and 5 participants who self-identified as continuing-generation. Thus, the final sample included a total of 81 participants out of 2,000 included in the study.

**Data Entry**

The collected data were exported from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel to enable the researcher to review the responses and determine which participants may need to be removed for lack of survey completion. Several respondents did not complete the entirety of the question that solicited information about financial aid support. These respondents were maintained in the sample, but the researcher decided not to include this item in the analysis. One respondent in the Kennesaw Campus sample did not respond to all questions of the SDTLA instrument; however, this participant was kept in the analysis because the one missing response remained within the 12 percent missing response recommendation for the instrument (Winston et al., 1999). Responses to the EI subtask of the SDTLA were rescored and the scale score was calculated within Excel based on instructions from the SDTLA Technical Manual. Afterwards, the data were exported into SPSS version 22 for analysis.
The researcher reverse-coded responses on the IIS instrument and created variables and calculations that corresponded to the five subscales of the instrument to create subscale scores. These subscales included (a) peer-group interactions, (b) interactions with faculty, (c) faculty concern for student development and teaching, (d) academic and intellectual development, and (e) institutional and goal commitments. The subscales were calculated as a mean of the participant’s scores on each item of the subscale. After entering all of the data, the researcher reviewed the participant demographics.

**Participant Demographics**

The demographic data collected from the participants is provided in Table 4.1. Participants were asked to identify their gender, ethnicity, age, employment status, employment location, number of hours employed per week, enrolled credit hours, and on-campus housing experience. The demographic data is summarized according to each campus.

**Kennesaw Campus**

Of the 64 respondents in the Kennesaw Campus sample that comprised 79.5 percent of the entire study sample, 49 identified as female (76.6 percent) and 15 identified as male (23.4 percent). The majority of respondents from this sample identified as Caucasian/White (n = 39), with the second largest identified ethnicity being identified as African American/Black (n = 13). All of the respondents in this sample were between the ages of 18 and 24. Approximately 56 percent of the sample stated they were employed, while 44 percent indicated they were not. Of those employed, 8 listed they were employed on-campus, 26 off-campus, and 2 noted they maintained
employment both on- and off-campus. In addition, the majority of those employed indicated that they worked 11-20 hours per week (n = 17) and the second-highest reporting group noted that they worked 21-30 hours per week (n = 10). Most respondents indicated they were enrolled for either 12 (n = 19) or 15 (n = 22) credit hours. Twenty-eight respondents self-identified as first-generation, while 36 self-identified as continuing-generation. Of the 64 respondents in this sample, 37 indicated that they had lived on the campus at one time (57.8 percent), while 27 indicated that they had not (42.2 percent).

**Marietta Campus**

The study yielded 17 respondents from the Marietta Campus, accounting for 20.5 percent of the entire study sample. Within that sample, 13 identified as male (76.5 percent) and 4 identified as female (23.5 percent). Consistent with the yield for the Kennesaw Campus, most respondents identified as Caucasian/White (n = 8), but conversely the second largest identified ethnicity was Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 5). All of the respondents in this sample were between the ages of 18 and 24. Eleven (64.7 percent) respondents reported they were not employed, while 6 (35.3 percent) respondents reported they were employed, displaying a larger difference than in the Kennesaw Campus sample. Of those 6 employed, 5 of them indicated they were employed off-campus and the other one reported on-campus employment. The majority of those employed noted that they worked between 5 and 10 hours per week. While the Kennesaw Campus sample displayed a large concentration of respondents taking either 12 or 15 credit hours with an average of 13 hours, the Marietta Campus sample displayed a consistent frequency between 12 and 17 credit hours, with an average of 14 hours.
Twelve (78.6 percent) respondents identified as first-generation and 5 (29.4 percent) identified as continuing-generation. Similarly, 12 (78.6 percent) respondents indicated that they had lived on campus at one time, while 5 (39.4 percent) indicated that they had not.

Table 4.1

Summary of Demographic Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Kennesaw Campus</th>
<th>Marietta Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>Continuing-Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data Analysis

Reliability, independent samples t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The researcher performed a reliability analysis using Cronbach’s Alpha to determine how much the items on each subscale measured the same dimensions. Shapiro Wilk’s test was used to assess the distribution of the responses and Levene’s test for equality of variance was used to determine if homogeneity of variance existed in each analysis (Statistics.laerd.com). All statistical tests used an alpha level of .05 for evaluation. Table 4.5 summarizes the results of the independent samples t-test analysis on data collected from each campus, as well as the results from the t-test analysis to compare the mean subscale scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. The next sections will outline the results for the test for reliability, descriptive statistics related to the instrument scale, as well as the analysis used to address each research question.

### Reliability

The online survey questionnaire was employed to measure the two underlying constructs. The first construct, belonging, was measured using the Institutional Integration Scale (IIS), which included five subscales. The first of the five subscales,
peer-group interactions, consisted of seven questions. The peer-group interactions subscale had a high level of internal consistency for both samples, as determined by a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.867 for the Kennesaw Campus and 0.854 for the Marietta Campus. The second subscale within the IIS, interactions with faculty, consisted of five questions and had a high level of consistency as well, as determined by a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.884 for the Kennesaw Campus and 0.624 for the Marietta Campus. The third subscale, faculty concern for student development and teaching, consisted of five questions, and possessed high levels of internal consistency for the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus with alpha scores of 0.740 and 0.702 respectively. The fourth subscale, academic and intellectual development, consisted of seven questions and also possessed high levels of internal consistency with alpha scores of 0.804 for the Kennesaw Campus and 0.700 for the Marietta Campus. The fifth subscale, institutional and goal commitments consisted of 6 items and received a Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.602 in the Kennesaw Campus sample and a score of 0.741 in the Marietta Campus sample; therefore, reliability of this subscale for the Kennesaw Campus may be in question.

The second construct, educational involvement, was measured using the Educational Involvement subtask of the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment. The subtask consisted of fourteen items. After conducting a test for reliability, the researcher found the scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.776 in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 0.768 in the Marietta Campus sample. Table 4.2 summarizes the results of the reliability tests.
Table 4.2

Summary of Reliability Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Kennesaw Campus</th>
<th>Marietta Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Group Interactions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Faculty</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional and Goal Commitments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Involvement Subtask</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics on Scales

The researcher conducted analysis on the six scales used to address the two research questions. Table 4.3 reports the descriptive statistics for each instrument or subscale from the Kennesaw Campus sample. Table 4.4 reports the statistics for the Marietta Campus sample.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Belonging and Educational Involvement Scales in Kennesaw Campus Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Group Interactions</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Faculty</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional and Goal Commitments</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Involvement Subtask</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics for Belonging and Educational Involvement Scales in Marietta Campus Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Group Interactions</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Faculty</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1

*Do students who are first-generation experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation?*

**Peer-Group Interactions.** In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in peer-group interaction between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. Peer-group interaction scores for both the first-generation and continuing-generation group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for peer-group interaction scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .400$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean peer-group interaction scores between first-generation ($M = 3.44, SD = 0.93$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.32, SD = 0.83$), although first-generation participants scored higher than continuing-generation participants, $t(62) = .556, p = .576$.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in peer-group interaction between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There were outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no

| Institutional and Goal Commitments | 4.44 | .55 |
| Educational Involvement Subtask    | 2.82 | .82 |
data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Peer-group interaction scores for both the first-generation and continuing-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for peer-group interaction scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .272$). The test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean peer-group interaction scores between first-generation ($M = 3.61, SD = 0.72$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.08$), with first-generation participants scoring higher than continuing-generation participants, $t(15) = 1.181, p = .256$.

**Interactions with Faculty.** In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in interactions with faculty between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There was one outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Interactions with faculty scores for both the first-generation participants and continuing-generation group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for interactions with faculty scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances.
(p = .667). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean interactions with faculty scores between first-generation (M = 3.49, SD = 0.73) and continuing-generation participants (M = 3.22, SD = 0.78), with first-generation participants scoring higher than continuing-generation participants, t(62) = 1.425, p = .159.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in interactions with faculty between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. Interactions with faculty scores for the first-generation group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test (p > .05); however, peer-group interaction scores for continuing-generation group were not normally distributed (p < .05). There was homogeneity of variances for interactions with faculty scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances (p = .255). The test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean peer-group interaction scores between first-generation (M = 3.33, SD = 0.52) and continuing-generation participants (M = 3.32, SD = 0.66), with first-generation participants scoring higher than continuing-generation participants, t(15) = -0.045, p = .965.

**Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching.** In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in faculty concern for student development and teaching between first-generation and continuing-
generation participants. There were outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for the continuing-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, those for the first-generation group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .051$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean faculty concern for student development and teaching scores between first-generation ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.79$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.60$), with first-generation participants scoring higher than continuing-generation participants, $t(62) = 0.633$, $p = .529$.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in faculty concern for student development and teaching between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There was an outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data point and determined that it was a genuine response and appropriate to maintain in the study. Faculty concern for
student development and teaching scores for the first-generation participants were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for the continuing-generation group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .212$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean faculty concern for student development and teaching scores between first-generation ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.66$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.21$), with continuing-generation participants scoring higher than first-generation participants, $t(15) = -0.067$, $p = .947$.

**Academic and Intellectual Development.** In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in academic and intellectual development between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There were outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Academic and intellectual development scores for the first-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, those for the continuing-generation group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for academic and intellectual
development scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .996$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean academic and intellectual development scores between first-generation ($M = 3.62, SD = 0.74$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.39, SD = 0.70$), with first-generation participants scoring higher than continuing-generation participants, $t(62) = 1.271, p = .209$.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in academic and intellectual development between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There was an outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data point and determined that it was a genuine response and appropriate to maintain in the study. Academic and intellectual development scores for both the first-generation and continuing-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for academic and intellectual development scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .584$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean academic and intellectual development scores between first-generation ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.63$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 3.51, SD = 0.68$), with continuing-generation participants scoring higher than first-generation participants, $t(15) = -0.391, p = .701$. 


Institutional and Goal Commitments. In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in institutional and goal commitments between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There was an outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Neither of the institutional and goal commitment scores for both the first-generation and the continuing-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for institutional and goal commitment scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .401$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean institutional and goal commitment scores between first-generation ($M = 4.37, SD = 0.64$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 4.08, SD = 0.60$), although first-generation participants scored higher than continuing-generation participants, $t(62) = 1.868, p = .066$.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in institutional and goal commitments between first-generation and continuing-generation participants. There was an outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the
responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Institutional and goal commitment scores for the continuing-generation group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, those for the first-generation group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for institutional and goal commitment scores for first-generation and continuing-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .589$). The t-test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean institutional and goal commitment scores between first-generation ($M = 4.43, SD = 0.52$) and continuing-generation participants ($M = 4.47, SD = 0.68$), with continuing-generation participants scoring higher than first-generation participants, $t(15) = -0.12, p = .906$.

**Research Question 2**

*Do students who are first-generation experience educational involvement living in residence halls at the same rate as students who are not first-generation?*

The Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) is comprised of three developmental tasks: (a) Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, (b) Developing Autonomy, and (c) Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships (Winston et al., 1999). Each of these three tasks is subdivided into subtasks. The Educational Involvement (EI) subtask, which corresponds to the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose developmental task, considers whether students have well-defined goals and plans, are knowledgeable about available resources, and are actively involved in the academic life of the institution (Winston et al.). The EI subtask was used in this study to measure the
differences between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-
generation related to these ideas.

In the Kennesaw Campus sample, there were 28 first-generation and 36
continuing-generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine
if there were differences in EI subtask scores between first-generation and continuing-
generation participants. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of
the boxplot. EI subtask scores for both the first-generation and continuing-generation
group were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was
homogeneity of variances for EI subtask scores for first-generation and continuing-
generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .388$).
The test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean EI
subtask scores between first-generation ($M = 3.08, SD = 0.77$) and continuing-generation
participants ($M = 3.00, SD = 0.87$), although first-generation participants scored higher
than continuing-generation participants, $t(62) = 0.357, p = .722$.

In the Marietta Campus sample, there were 12 first-generation and 5 continuing-
generation participants. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there
were differences in EI subtask scores between first-generation and continuing-generation
participants. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot.
EI subtask scores for the first-generation were normally distributed, as assessed by
Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, EI subtask scores for continuing-generation
group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). The assumption for homogeneity of
variances was violated for EI subtask scores for first-generation and continuing-
generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .024$).
The test indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in mean EI subtask scores between first-generation \((M = 2.66, SD = 0.66)\) and continuing-generation participants \((M = 3.20, SD = 1.10)\), but continuing-generation participants scored higher than first-generation participants, \(t(5.251) = -1.024, p = .351\).

Overall, the results found to address research question two are inconclusive. While first-generation respondents scored higher on the EI subtask items than continuing-generation respondents in the Kennesaw Campus sample and continuing-generation respondents scored higher on the EI subtask items than first-generation respondents in the Marietta Campus sample, neither of the test results were statistically significant. Thus, it is difficult to determine that the results are due to anything more than chance.

**Table 4.5**

*Summary of Overall T-Test and ANOVA Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Kennesaw Campus FG</th>
<th>Kennesaw Campus FG vs. Marietta Campus CG</th>
<th>Marietta Campus FG</th>
<th>Interaction between Generation x Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Group Interactions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Faculty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional and Goal Commitments</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Involvement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* FG = first-generation; CG = continuing-generation. The use of X denotes which group of participants’ mean score was higher on the subscale for each campus.
The use of K (Kennesaw Campus) or M (Marietta Campus) denotes which campus’ group of first-generation participants had a higher mean score on each subscale. The use of X in this column denotes where the ANOVA resulted in potential interaction effects for each subscale.

Table 4.5 summarizes the results of the independent samples t-test analysis on data collected from each campus, as well as the results from the t-test analysis to compare the mean subscale scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. First-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus scored higher on the Interactions with Faculty, Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching, and Academic and Intellectual Development subscales and first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus scored higher on the Peer-Group Interactions, Institutional and Goal Commitments, Educational Involvement subtask; however, none of the results were statistically significant. Continued analysis of the collected data used a two-way between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA). First, the t-test results of the comparison between the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus are presented. Second, the ANOVA results on each subscale are presented.

**Campus to Campus Analysis on Peer-Group Interactions**

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in peer-group interactions scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There were outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses
corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Peer-group interaction scores for both first-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for peer-group interaction scores for both groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .095$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean peer-group interaction scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.93$) and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.72$), although first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus, $t(38) = .542$, $p = .591$.

**Campus to Campus Analysis on Interactions with Faculty**

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in interactions with faculty scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There was one outlier in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outlier in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the response corresponding with the outlying data point and determined that it was a genuine response and appropriate to maintain in the study. Interactions with faculty scores for both first-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for interactions with faculty scores for both
groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .343$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean interactions with faculty scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus ($M = 3.49, SD = 0.73$) and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.52$), although first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus, $t(38) = .688, p = .496$.

**Campus to Campus Analysis on Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching**

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in faculty concern for student development and teaching scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. Faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for the first-generation group from the Marietta Campus was normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, the scores from the Kennesaw Campus were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for faculty concern for student development and teaching scores for both groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .428$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean faculty concern for student development and teaching scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus ($M = 3.32, SD = 0.79$) and first-
generation participants on the Marietta Campus \((M = 3.25, SD = 0.66)\), although first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus, \(t(38) = .274, p = .785\).

**Campus to Campus Analysis on Academic and Intellectual Development**

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in academic and intellectual development scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There were outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. Academic and intellectual development scores for both first-generation groups were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test \((p > .05)\). There was homogeneity of variances for academic and intellectual development scores for both groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances \((p = .692)\). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean academic and intellectual development scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus \((M = 3.62, SD = 0.74)\) and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus \((M = 3.38, SD = 0.63)\), although first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus, \(t(38) = .985, p = .331\).
Campus to Campus Analysis on Institutional and Goal Commitments

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in institutional and goal commitment scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of the boxplot. Institutional and goal commitment scores for the first-generation groups from the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus were not normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p < .05$). There was homogeneity of variances for institutional and goal commitment scores for both groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .292$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in mean institutional and goal commitment scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus ($M = 4.37, SD = 0.64$) and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus ($M = 4.43, SD = 0.52$), although first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus $t(38) = .309, p = .759$.

Campus to Campus Analysis on Educational Involvement Subtask

There were 28 first-generation participants in the Kennesaw Campus sample and 12 first-generation participants in the Marietta Campus sample. An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in the educational involvement subtask scores between first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus. There were outliers in the data as assessed by
inspection of the boxplot. The researcher decided to leave the outliers in the data because there were no data entry errors and no measurement errors. The researcher reviewed the responses corresponding with the outlying data points and determined that they were genuine responses and appropriate to maintain in the study. The educational involvement subtask scores for the first-generation group from the Marietta Campus were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p > .05$); however, those on the Kennesaw Campus were not. There was homogeneity of variances for the educational involvement subtask scores for both groups of first-generation participants, as assessed by Levene’s test for equality of variances ($p = .824$). The t-test indicated that there was a not statistically significant difference in the mean educational involvement subtask scores between first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.33$) and first-generation participants on the Marietta Campus ($M = 2.59, SD = 0.30$), although first-generation participants from the Marietta Campus scored higher than first-generation participants from the Kennesaw Campus, $t(38) = .508, p = .614$.

**Analysis of Variance Results**

In order to analyze the influence of living in residence halls on the results, the researcher conducted two-way between-subjects ANOVAs to determine if an interaction effect existed between two independent variables in this study, generation status (first-generation or continuing-generation) and housing status (living on-campus or living off-campus). Upon review of the profile plots, no potential interaction effects were found between Generation and Housing status in the Peer-Group Interactions subscale for both the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus. Potential interaction effects were found between Generation status and Housing status on the subscales for Interactions.
with Faculty, Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching, Academic and Intellectual Development, Institutional and Goal Commitments, and the Educational Involvement Subtask for both the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus. Table 4.6 summarizes the notable results from review of the profile plots.

Table 4.6

Summary of Notable ANOVA Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position on Profile Plot</th>
<th>Kennesaw Campus</th>
<th>Marietta Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>C - FG</td>
<td>C - FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>C - CG</td>
<td>R - FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>R - FG</td>
<td>R - CG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>R - CG</td>
<td>C - CG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Academic = Academic and Intellectual Development; Goal = Institutional and Goal Commitment; EI = Educational Involvement; FG = First-Generation; CG = Continuing-Generation.

Despite these outcomes, the interaction effects were not significant enough to substantiate the findings. There was no statistically significant interaction between generation and housing status for the Interactions with Faculty score on the Kennesaw Campus, \( F(1,60) = 0.057, p = .813, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .001 \) or the Marietta Campus, \( F(1,13) = 1.684, p = .217, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .115 \). There was no statistically significant interaction between generation and housing status for the Faculty Concern for Development and Teaching score on the Kennesaw Campus, \( F(1,60) = 0.082, p = .776, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .001 \) or the Marietta Campus, \( F(1,13) = 0.759, p = .400, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .055 \). There was no statistically significant interaction between generation and housing status for the Academic and Intellectual Development score on the Kennesaw Campus, \( F(1,60) = \)
0.318, \( p = .575 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .005 \) or the Marietta Campus, \( F(1,13) = 0.479, p = .501 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .036 \). There was no statistically significant interaction between generation and housing status for the Institutional and Goal Commitments score on the Kennesaw Campus, \( F(1,60) = 2.097, p = .153 \), partial \( n^2 = .034 \) or the Marietta Campus, \( F(1,13) = 4.443, p = .055 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .255 \). There was no statistically significant interaction between generation and housing status for the Educational Involvement Subtask score on the Kennesaw Campus, \( F(1,60) = 2.475, p = .121 \), partial \( n^2 = .040 \) or the Marietta Campus, \( F(1,13) = 2.881, p = .113 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .181 \).

**Summary of Results**

A total of 81 questionnaires were completed and included for data analysis. Independent-samples t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to address each of the research questions. Based on the t-test analysis, no significant difference was found between students who are first-generation and students who are continuing-generation on Peer-Group Interactions, Interactions with Faculty, Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching, Academic and Intellectual Development, Institutional and Goal Commitment, or Educational Involvement, but observed differences do contradict some existing research. The ANOVA found no significant interaction between generation status and housing status, but the observed interaction effects on the profile plot suggest an interaction could exist. The potential implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences faced by students who are first-generation related to belonging and educational involvement and how living in residence halls influenced them. Belonging and educational involvement are key predictors of successful persistence in college so examining them, and considering how living in residence halls affects those outcomes, is critical in understanding this population’s experiences (Engle, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004). This study employed a quantitative research design to examine belonging utilizing the Institutional Integration Scale (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980) and educational involvement using the Education Involvement subtask of the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) (Winston et al., 1999).

First, the researcher offers learning outcomes from conducting this study and how future researchers might benefit from this work. Next, a summary and interpretation of the findings in this study related to these ideas is provided. Third, the study’s conclusions related to the research questions will be provided. Next, the researcher will present the implications of this study. Finally, recommendations for practice and further research will be reviewed.
Learning Outcomes

“Research is dirty.” One of the more poignant pieces of advice during this study was that research is rarely a clean and orderly process. While the purpose of research is discovery, the innuendo in discovery is that some things are unknown, or unpredictable. This study did not yield statistically significant findings; however, discovery can still occur amidst these outcomes. In this section, the researcher will summarize his learning outcomes from this research.

The Purpose Had Merit

No research should be undertaken that does not have meaning. Meaning might exist for the researcher, the population or topic under review, or other stakeholders, but the research ought to have a purpose that expands understanding and perhaps raises further questions for discovery. In this study, the population under consideration, students who are first-generation, was worthy of consideration because of the challenges they face in higher education. While this population is not as identifiable as other marginalized groups, the intersection of the first-generation identity with other marginalized identities creates an opportunity to identify barriers and solutions for more than one population. In an era of declining resources, higher education administrators must utilize what they have to affect the greatest impact on as many students as they can.

Flexible Vision

Research begins with a question about a topic and evolves into a vision for how a study will be designed and executed. Despite this, research will not always go as desired and a researcher must remain flexible. It is important to listen to the feedback from advisors, peers, and other stakeholders who have a vested interest in the outcome of the
study, but also have experiences and lenses that can offer valuable insight. In this study, residence hall living was originally intended as a primary construct of the study. Upon further consideration and advice from key advisors, the researcher adjusted the study to focus more on the areas of belonging and involvement. Still, a vision existed for how living in residence halls might influence the population under review. Retaining clarity of that vision prompted the researcher to find a way to maintain that idea within the study, albeit in a smaller form.

**Retaining Focus**

In developing a research study, it is easy to lose sight of the study’s intent. A fine balance exists between a thorough literature review and one that wanders off-topic seeking to relate every nuance of the topic under study. The same is true for data analysis. A thorough mining of data can address many questions, but also raise a number of new ones. In this study, the researcher quickly identified that the results to the initial t-tests lacked statistical significance. While dismayed, he undertook further analysis to determine if any review of the data might yield a result that would have meaning, if only to direct further inquiry. During the continued analysis, the researcher found himself diving more and more into the data, but acknowledged at one point that there was only so much this study could yield and that he must remain focused on its purpose.

**Maintain an Appropriate Threshold for Risks**

Any research involves some level of managed risk because unforeseen variables can influence its outcomes. A researcher must appropriately balance the risk though. Otherwise, the resources invested in the study might be wasted. This study was executed in the late spring semester at an institution undergoing massive and systemic change. In
hindsight, wiser decisions regarding the timing and the site selection for the study might have afforded better outcomes. Near the end of a spring academic semester, students are typically more focused on final examination preparation, class registration for the fall term, and planning for summer. This was not an ideal time to pursue their participation in a study such as this. It should have been conducted earlier in the term. In addition, the consolidation this institution was involved in predictably offered too many confounding variables where any research could be negatively impacted. A different site should have been chosen or this site should have been used at a period of time after the consolidation was complete.

**Summary**

Another important piece of advice gained in this study is that a dissertation is often someone’s first attempt at academic research. As a novice, the researcher understands that experience will yield better skills and insights. It is important for other novice researchers to understand that their first study does not have to be their Mt. Everest. If oriented to research, they will most likely conduct other studies in the future and those studies will likely see improvement in design and analysis from those they completed before. To that end, it is critical to understand this most important piece of advice heard in this entire process, “The best dissertation is a done dissertation.”

**Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

Overall, all results from the data analysis displayed no statistical significance. Thus, there is no way to determine if the differences in scoring are due to anything more than chance. Previous research would predict that students who are first-generation would report lower feelings of overall educational involvement and belonging than
students who are continuing-generation (Pascarella et al., 2004). Students who are first-generation would be less likely to engage with peers, less likely to interact and have meaningful relationships with faculty, and less likely to feel a connection and commitment to the institution (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terenzini et al., 1996b), but when they are connected research shows that they can perform well, if not better than students who are not first-generation (Pascarella et al.). In the following two subsections, this chapter will present the summary and interpretation of findings as they relate to each of the two constructs in this study.

**Belonging**

The first research question in this study asked, “Do students who are first-generation experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation?” In this study, belonging was considered in relation to social integration, academic integration, and commitment. The subscales responses for Peer-Group Interactions and Interactions with Faculty measured social integration while the Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching and Academic and Intellectual Development subscales measured academic integration. The Institutional and Goal Commitments subscale measured commitment. Each of these areas, including the influence of residence hall living on belonging are discussed below.

**Social integration.** On both the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus, students who are first-generation appear to have higher levels of social integration than students who are continuing-generation. This contradicts previous research (Hertel, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and is surprising as there are no dedicated programs for students who are first-generation that would enable them to socialize more effectively
than their peers (Inkelas et al., 2007). While on the Kennesaw Campus, this outcome
trended consistently across other areas of belonging; this is the only area where students
who are first-generation reported higher feelings than their continuing-generation peers on the Marietta Campus. In comparing first-generation participants between campuses, the results were mixed. Kennesaw Campus first-generation participants felt stronger about their peer interactions, while those on the Marietta Campus felt stronger about their faculty interactions. The former outcome could result from the larger breadth of social activities taking place on the Kennesaw Campus compared to the Marietta campus. The latter outcome could be attributed to campus size. The Marietta Campus is smaller in physical size and enrollment than the Kennesaw Campus and smaller campuses can provide environments more conducive student-to-student interaction and faculty-to-student interaction (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991); however, if true in this case the results would more likely show higher scores in favor of the Marietta Campus on each component of social integration.

**Academic integration.** On the Kennesaw Campus, students who are first-generation reported higher feelings of academic integration than their continuing-generation peers did. In comparison, students who are first-generation on the Marietta Campus reported lower feelings of academic integration than students who are continuing-generation did. In the campus-to-campus comparison, students who are first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus reported higher feelings of academic integration than those on the Marietta Campus. The Marietta Campus maintained academic programs based on STEM fields while the Kennesaw Campus maintained more liberal arts programs. Could these differences play a role in how students acclimate to the
academic environment on each campus? Students who are first-generation are not as likely to take advanced math courses in high school as students who are continuing-generation (Horn & Nunez, 2000) and STEM fields of study would warrant this level of preparation to be successful. In addition, if these outcomes were viewed through the lens of Freeman et al. (2007), one could interpret them to mean that the faculty in Kennesaw were more encouraging of student participation and faculty interaction than those in Marietta.

**Commitment.** Similar to the outcome with academic integration, students who are first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus reported higher feelings of commitment to the institution and degree attainment than their continuing-generation counterparts did. Could first-generation participants on the Kennesaw Campus find more congruence with the institution’s values (Berger and Milem, 1999)? The Kennesaw Campus has been enrolling higher quantities of marginalized identities over the previous ten years, many of which have intersections of identity with first-generation (Levine-Rasky, 2011). On the Marietta Campus, students who are continuing-generation reported higher feelings of commitment. Between the first-generation participants on each campus, those on the Marietta Campus still reported higher feelings of commitment than those on the Kennesaw Campus despite the fact they were lower than were continuing-generation peers on the Marietta Campus.

**The influence of residence hall living.** Due to the lack of statistical significance in the data analysis, the ANOVA tests could only be considered in relation to potential interaction effects between generation status and housing status. The findings illustrated that living in residence halls could have an influence on one level of social integration.
(Interactions with Faculty), both levels of academic integration, and commitment on both campus samples. The potential influence on one area of academic integration (Academic and Intellectual Development) and commitment were of notable interest.

**Academic and intellectual development.** On the Kennesaw Campus, all commuter students reported higher feelings of Academic and Intellectual Development than did residential students. Though not statistically significant, commuter students who are first-generation reported much higher feelings in this area than residential students who first-generation, although residential students who are first-generation reported almost identically to commuter students who are continuing-generation. On the Marietta Campus, all residential students reported higher feelings of Academic and Intellectual Development than commuter students did, but commuter students who are first-generation reported higher feelings than did commuter students who are continuing-generation. In this area, living in residence halls on the Kennesaw Campus did not appear to help students’ feelings of academic and intellectual development, but living on campus did provide some benefit to residential students who are first-generation compared to residential students who are continuing-generation. Living in residence halls on the Marietta Campus provided significant benefit to students from both generation statuses, but commuter students who are first-generation still reported higher feelings in this area compared to peers who are continuing-generation. A similar pattern was evident in the commitment area as well.

**Commitment.** On the Kennesaw Campus, commuter students who are first-generation reported higher feelings of commitment than residential students who are first-generation did, but both groups of first-generation participants scored higher than all
continuing-generation participants. Are students who are first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus more inclined to persist than those who are continuing-generation? Residential students who are first-generation reported almost identically to residential students who are continuing-generation; however, the results illustrated that housing status made a large effect in this area for both first-generation and continuing-generation participants. Though not statistically significant, commuter students who are first-generation displayed much higher commitment than residential students who are first-generation and commuter students who are continuing-generation showed much lower commitment than did residential students who are continuing-generation. Thus, a question must be asked – in the area of commitment did living in residence halls on the Kennesaw Campus help students who are continuing-generation, but hurt students who are first-generation?

On the Marietta Campus, residential students from both generation statuses reported higher feelings of commitment than commuter students from both generation statuses; however, the difference between residential students who are first-generation and commuter students who are first-generation was minimal. Living on the Marietta Campus appeared to make almost no impact in this area for students who are first-generation, but residential students who are continuing-generation reported much higher feelings of commitment than did commuter students who are continuing-generation. The latter finding was consistent with other research (Astin, 1975; Astin, 1993; Berger, 1997; Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Longerbeam et al., 2007; Pascarella et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996a; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1982).
Educational Involvement

The second research question in this study asked, “Do students who are first-generation experience educational involvement living in residence halls at the same level as students who are not first-generation?” The Educational Involvement subtask of the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) was utilized in this study to assess participants’ experiences with educational involvement on campus (Winston et al., 1999). Students who are first-generation reported higher feelings in this area than students who are continuing-generation in the Kennesaw Campus sample; however, on the Marietta Campus students who are continuing-generation reported higher feelings. The finding on the Marietta Campus is supported by research (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Bozick, 2007; Engle, 2007) while the difference between the means on the Kennesaw Campus was so small that it could be regarded as a similar score between the two groups. In a campus-to-campus comparison, students who are first-generation from the Marietta Campus reported higher than their peers did from the Kennesaw Campus on the Educational Involvement subtask.

The ANOVA tests to review the interaction between generation status and housing status in relation to educational involvement displayed similar patterns as those found on the Academic and Intellectual Development and Institutional and Goal Commitment subscales for belonging. Based on a review of the profile plot, living on campus on the Kennesaw Campus appeared to make a strong impact on students who are continuing-generation with residential students who are continuing-generation reporting much higher than their commuter peers. Commuter students who are first-generation
reported higher on the Educational Involvement subtask than their residential peers, but the difference was not as large as between the two groups of students who are continuing-generation. The same pattern existed on the Marietta Campus where living on campus positively affects students who are continuing-generation, but living off-campus appears to positively impact students who are first-generation.

Conclusions

Limitations

Previous research indicated that getting involved in campus life instills a sense of belonging to students and living in residence halls is significant contributor to both involvement and belonging, and thereby persistence (Berger & Milem, 1999; Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Based on the findings in this study, few real conclusions can be made due to several limitations resulting from the data collection and analysis, as well as confounding variables. All findings lacked statistical significance so it is difficult to argue that the results are due to anything other than chance alone. Caution must be taken because two of the subscales on the IIS, Interactions with Faculty and Institutional and Goal Commitments, received low Cronbach’s alpha scores on the Marietta Campus and the Kennesaw Campus respectively. The participant size of 81 is very small compared to the sample population of 2,000 so it is very difficult to generalize the findings. In addition, data collection occurred in the final weeks of the traditional academic year. This is typically a period of time when students are focused on preparing for final exams and end-of-term projects, as well as planning for the summer. Other circumstances existing at the time of the study may have had an impact as well.
Confounding variables from circumstances occurring during data collection may have had an impact on the results. While the two campuses were part of one institution at the time of the study, that situation had only existed since January 2015. Before that time, the two campuses represented two different universities, each with vastly different academic programs and missions. In November 2013, it was announced that the two institutions would consolidate to create a new, larger university. In January 2015, the two institutions officially became one, but the period in between involved significant uncertainty. As the institutional identity, including name, colors, and mascot, were all eliminated at the Marietta Campus through the consolidation, many faculty, staff, and students on the Marietta Campus experienced additional challenges beyond those arising from the simple state of change both universities were experiencing during this study’s timeline.

As previously mentioned, campus size existed as a confounding variable. The Marietta Campus is much smaller than the Kennesaw Campus in both physical square footage and enrollment. The latter variable creates an environment that would typically be more conducive to increased interactions with faculty and better relationships between students, faculty, and staff (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Any results in the study along these dimensions should be considered in the context of this confounding variable.

Another confounding variable related to housing status. This study only differentiated between on- and off-campus housing statuses based on asking participants whether they ever lived in a campus residential facility. It did not consider the various forms of off-campus housing such as living at home with a parent or guardian, living in off-campus apartments, or living in off-campus student-housing complexes. The latter
form of off-campus housing existed in numerous quantities in very close proximity to the
Kennesaw Campus and the institution provided transportation services to several of them.
Reviewing the results for participants who lived off-campus in the context of these
different off-campus housing options may have yielded different insights. Limitations
notwithstanding, some potential conclusions could be made from this research.

Discussion

In respect to the first research question, the inconsistency between the two
campus outcomes supports the premise that students who are first-generation do not
experience belonging living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-
generation. This means that the findings in this study on this basic level are consistent
with previous research that illustrated differences in persistence between these groups
(Stebleton et al., 2014a). Furthermore, while living on-campus is better for all students
on the Marietta Campus, students who are first-generation appear to benefit more on the
Kennesaw Campus when they live off-campus, at least within the areas of Academic and
Intellectual Development and Institutional and Goal Commitment. This infers that while
the basic understanding that differences in persistence existed based on generation status,
something about this study yielded a different outcome on which population was more
advantaged than what other research would dictate (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Inkelas et al. (2007) illustrated how students who are first-generation might
benefit from participating in living-learning communities, even more so than the same
population that did not participate in living-learning communities. Are the needs of
students who are first-generation only served when they are housed within a focused,
intentional environment like those found in living-learning communities? Do traditional
residence hall environments allow them to be ignored? Research supports that this can occur for other marginalized populations so the same may be true for first-generation (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012). Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds (2009) infer that more work needs to be done in this area to better understand the impact of residence hall environments on marginalized populations.

In respect to the second research question, students who are first-generation do not experience educational involvement living in residence halls the same as students who are not first-generation. On the Kennesaw Campus, students who are first-generation reported higher feelings of educational involvement than did students who are continuing-generation, but students who are continuing-generation reported higher feelings of educational involvement on the Marietta Campus. This inconsistency illustrated that the experiences between students who are first-generation and students who are not first-generation are different. Pascarella et al. (2004) might substantiate both findings. In that study, the researchers found that students who are first-generation were less likely to participate in extra-curricular activities; however, when they did participate those students benefited more from them than students who are continuing-generation. Could students who are first-generation from the Kennesaw Campus be accessing extra-curricular activities more than their peers from the Marietta Campus? If so, what contributes to this difference? Since the Kennesaw Campus maintained a larger amount of campus services and activities, campus size could influence this outcome. This idea is further substantiated by the influence of living on campus on these populations. While living on campus provided small influence on students who are first-generation feelings’ of educational involvement, it contributed highly to the feelings of students who are not
first-generation. In fact, students who are first-generation appeared to benefit more from living off-campus with respect to feelings of educational involvement. Inkelas et al. (2007) might once again inform this finding. While living-learning communities exist on both the Kennesaw Campus and the Marietta Campus, none of them target students who are first-generation. Thus, all residential students who are first-generation are living in traditional residence hall environments. As students who are first-generation already enter college lacking the advantages that students who are continuing-generation possess, simply accessing residence hall environments may not be enough to support their involvement in campus life.

**Implications**

Previous research supported the idea that students who are first-generation will experience involvement and belonging differently than students who are not first-generation (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Bozick, 2007; Engle, 2007; Stebleton et al., 2014a). The inconsistencies between feelings related to belonging and educational involvement between the two groups on each campus support this, but warrant further consideration because they support a contrary notion. Why did students who are first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus report higher feelings of belonging and educational involvement than students who are not first-generation when most research would support the contrary idea? Assuming the results are not solely due to chance, students who are first-generation on the Kennesaw Campus might possess more awareness of the curricular and co-curricular offerings of the institution than research would maintain. Due to the fact that the majority of students enrolled at the Kennesaw Campus are from counties in close proximity to the institution, the familiarity with the campus might be much higher than
what existed for participants in other studies. Motivation may also play a role in this result. Historically, many students enrolled at this campus with plans to transfer to more prominent universities within one to two semesters. While this trend has not been examined from a generation status lens, it is possible students who are first-generation may not see other institutions as opportunities (Engle, 2007). Why did students who are first-generation report higher feelings related to social integration on the Marietta Campus? The results on the Marietta Campus are likely attributed to the size of the campus and the fact that many of the academic programs are in STEM fields, a situation that could yield more student interaction due shared interests and experiences across academic majors.

Research supports that living in residence halls makes a positive difference in first-generation populations as well (Inkelas et al., 2007); however, this study implies that living in residence halls on the Kennesaw Campus may not have the type of impact at this institution some research would predict (Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Students who are not first-generation were greatly impacted by living in residence halls at this institution, but living in residence halls on the Kennesaw Campus appeared to present unknown challenges to students who are first-generation. Did living on campus provide more support to students who are not first-generation than those that are first-generation? While research might normally assume that living in residence halls supports all students, simple access to that environment may not be enough. What about the residence hall program at the Kennesaw Campus negatively affected this population? As indicated in the discussion section, research like that conducted by Inkelas et al. might offer insight. This institution lacked residence hall environments and services that specifically target
this population so they are not gaining the attention that the living-learning communities cited by Inkelas et al. might provide. More research should be conducted at this campus to address these questions.

Living in residence halls on the Marietta Campus appears to support both students who are continuing-generation and those who are first-generation in feelings of belonging, but for educational involvement the findings suggest a similar concern as exists on the Kennesaw Campus where students who are continuing-generation benefited greatly from living in residence halls and students who are first-generation benefited more by living off-campus. Research conducted by Pascarella et al. (2004) and Stebleton et al. (2014a) support the former outcomes. Pike and Kuh suggested that all students who are first-generation should be required to live in residence halls during their first year of enrollment; however, the latter finding would indicate this approach would challenge this population more than it would help unless more dedicated efforts are made to support them (Inkelas et al., 2007).

**Recommendations for Research and Practice**

The limitations of this study prevent substantiation of the findings; however, the findings suggest an interesting interaction between generation status and housing status. Future researchers should conduct a similar study earlier in the academic year to obtain a stronger participant rate that will help generalize the findings. It would be important to conduct the study after students have had enough time to experience college to appropriately respond to the questionnaire questions, but at a time that does not conflict with mid-term or final examinations and break periods. The weeks between the start of the spring semester and spring mid-terms and spring break would be recommended.
Further research should explore the differences between residential students who are first-generation and commuter students who are first-generation. Inkelas et al. (2007) utilized the results from the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP) to review differences between residential students who are first-generation who participated in living-learning communities and those that resided in traditional residence hall environments. While the researchers did not include it for their study, the NSLLP collected data from commuter students who are first-generation as well. This data could be used in a future study to examine the differences between students who are first-generation that live in residence halls and those that do not. A study conducted by Stebleton et al. (2014b) utilized the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey to examine belonging related to the population. While a longer instrument than the IIS, boasting 600 items, it has been used widely with the University of California system to assess multiple areas related to student experiences. A qualitative study focused specifically on the residential experiences of students who are first-generation compared to students who are continuing-generation would be useful as well. Phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study might all be effective methods to explore these issues.

Student affairs practitioners should consider whether traditionally supportive systems such as on-campus housing truly support all student populations. In this study, students who are first-generation appeared to benefit more when they lived off-campus, but students who are continuing-generation benefited more from living on campus. The findings in Inkelas et al. (2007) suggested that focused efforts towards students who are first-generation are what yield strong outcomes for the population. While this institution
lacked these types of focused efforts, the explanation for these findings are unknown at this time. Despite this, the premise supports the need to critically examine how student affairs and higher education might unknowingly place barriers to college success in front of students who are first-generation or other marginalized populations. Several researchers have proposed ways to offer more support to students who are first-generation towards their persistence including targeted admissions recruitment efforts, group counseling and psychoeducational workshops, programmatic outreach, learning communities, living-learning communities, live-on requirements, service learning opportunities, first-year seminars, and faculty and academic advisor training on how to work with the population (Inkelas et al., 2007; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Stebleton et al., 2014a).

Students who are continuing-generation maintain a level of privilege in higher education and it is possible that college and university systems have been unknowingly built to support that privilege. Enrollment, socioeconomic, and persistence barriers exist that prevent students who are first-generation from accessing higher education in the same way as their continuing-generation peers. Students who are first-generation are not conditioned to believe that they can or should attend college; thereby limiting their academic preparation (Choy et al., 2005; Engle, 2007; Gibbons & Borders, 2010). For those that do prepare, they may not be able to afford the cost of attendance to enroll (Bozick, 2007; Engle, 2007). In the event a student who is first-generation enrolls, she will likely find a system built on the assumption that all students maintain the same insights on how to navigate the college experience such as registering for classes, signing up to living in a residence hall, and getting involved (Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh,
2005). The fallacy in this premise is that students who are first-generation are by their very identification the first member of their family to attend college and therefore lack the assistance of a family member guiding them through the process the way a student who is continuing-generation possesses. By maintaining systems that ignore this identification and limit additional support for the population, higher education administrators are supporting a system of educational privilege. By creating more support systems and removing these barriers, students who are first-generation will find increased feelings of involvement and belonging and be able to persist in higher education. Colleges and universities will experience positive gains from this outcome as their retention and graduation rates increase. As argued by Freire (2000), increasing support for one population will yield support for the needs of others.
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APPENDIX A

Copy of Survey Questionnaire
April 13, 2015

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Student Personnel Service program conducting research for a dissertation under the direction of Dr. Diane L. Cooper in the Department of Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled Barriers and Experiences Faced by Students who are First-Generation that Live in Residence Halls. The purpose of this study is to compare the college and residence hall experiences faced by students who are first in their families to attend college and students who are not the first in their families to attend college.

In order to participate in the study, you must be between 18 and 25 years of age.

Your participation will involve responding to an electronic questionnaire about your experiences in college. The questionnaire should take you no more than 30 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

Your data will be confidential, as no personally identifiable information will be collected, including your IP address. Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. The results of the research study may be published and would be presented in summary form only.

The findings from this project may provide information on the experiences faced by students who are the first in their families to attend college. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research, but you may discontinue your involvement in this research study any time prior to submitting your responses on the online questionnaire. You may also choose to skip any question you are not comfortable answering. Your participation will not affect your grades or class standing with Kennesaw State University.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (770) 235-4118 or send an e-mail to wjcooper@uga.edu.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Address questions or problems regarding these activities to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu. By clicking the “I consent to participate” button and completing this questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research.
I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. (1)

I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions. (2)

If I agree and give my consent... Is Selected, Then Skip To Which is your sex?If I do not agree to participate... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey
Before we start this questionnaire, we have a few questions about you.

Which is your sex?
- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Other (3)

What is your ethnicity?
- African American/Black (1)
- Asian/Pacific Islander (2)
- Caucasian/White (3)
- Hispanic/Latino (4)
- Multiracial (5)
- Native American (6)
- Other (7)

Which is your current age?
- Less than 18 (1)
- 18-24 (2)
- 25 or older (3)

Are you employed?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To If you answered YES to question 5, wh...If No Is Selected, Then Skip To How many credit hours are you taking ...

Where are you employed?
- On-Campus (1)
- Off-Campus (2)
- Both (3)

How many hours do you work per week?
- Less than 5 (1)
- 5 - 10 (2)
- 11 - 20 (3)
- 21 - 30 (4)
- 31 - 40 (5)
- More than 40 (6)
How many credit hours are you taking this semester?
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 (10)
- 11 (11)
- 12 (12)
- 13 (13)
- 14 (14)
- 15 (15)
- 16 (16)
- 17 (17)
- 18 (18)
- 19 (19)
- 20 (20)
- More than 20 (21)

Did you receive any of the following forms of financial aid? (Mark Yes or No for each item)

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<th>No (2)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work-study (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pell Grant (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need-based grants or scholarships (4)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merit-based grants or scholarships (5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Are you the first person in your immediate family (parents, guardians, siblings) to attend college?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Have you lived in any campus residential facility (Kennesaw Campus - Austin Residence Complex, KSU Place, University Village, University Village Suites or Marietta Campus - Commons, Courtyard, Howell, Hornet Village, Special Interest Houses) since starting at KSU?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No is selected, then skip to if you answered NO to question 15, where... If Yes is selected, then skip to please indicate one response for each...

What was the primary reason you did not? (Check all that apply)

- Cannot afford it (1)
- Inconvenient (2)
- Not eligible (e.g. - not taking enough credit hours, currently on suspension from housing) (3)
- Lack of information about them (4)
- Lack of parent encouragement to do it (5)
- Responsibility to family (6)
- Did not find it important to my college career (7)
- Did not think I would meet people like me (8)
Please indicate one response for each of the items below.

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<th>Agree (2)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (5)</th>
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<td>relationships with other students (1)</td>
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<td>The student friendships I have developed at this university</td>
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<td>had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest</td>
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ideas (4)
It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with other students (5)
Few of the students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem (6)
Most students at this university have values and attitudes different than my own (7)
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values and attitudes (8)
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had positive influence on my intellectual growth and
interest in ideas (9)
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had positive influence on my career goals and aspirations (10)
Since coming to this university I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member (11)
I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact informally with faculty members (12)
Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are generally interested in students (13)
Few of the faculty members I have had contact with
| are generally outstanding or superior teachers (14) | | | | |
| Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are willing to spend time outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to students (15) | | | | |
| Most of the faculty I have had contact with are interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas (16) | | | | |
| Most faculty members I have had contact with are genuinely interested in teaching (17) | | | | |
| I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development since enrolling in this university (18) | | | | |
| My academic experience has had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas (19) |   |   |   |   |   |
| I am satisfied with my academic experience at this university (20) |   |   |   |   |   |
| Few of my courses this year have been intellectually stimulating (21) |   |   |   |   |   |
| My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to this university (22) |   |   |   |   |   |
| I am more likely to attend a cultural event (for example, a concert, lecture, or art show) than I was before coming to this university |   |   |   |   |   |
I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would.

It is important for me to graduate from college.

I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend this university.

It is likely that I will register at this university next fall.

It is not important to me to graduate from this university.

I have no idea at all what I want to major in.

Getting good grades is not important to me.
For each question choose the one response that most closely reflects your beliefs, feelings, attitudes, experiences, or interests. Consider each statement carefully, but do not spend a great deal of time deliberating on a single statement. Work quickly, but carefully.

In terms of academic major or concentration,
- I am uncertain about possible majors and am a long way from a decision. (1)
- I have thought about several majors, but haven't done anything about it yet. (2)
- I have made a tentative decision about what I will major in. (3)
- I have made a firm decision about a major, but I still have doubts about whether I have made the right decision. (4)
- I have made a firm decision about a major in which I am confident that I will be successful. (5)

In terms of the array of possible academic majors at this college I have
- not spent much time investigating the possibilities. (1)
- talked to some students about their majors, but have not done any systematic investigation. (2)
- read the catalog and talked to some students and/or faculty/staff members about possible majors. (3)
- made a systematic effort to learn about possible majors and what they entail. (4)
- made a systematic effort to learn about possible majors and have carefully looked at my abilities and interests and how they fit different majors. (5)

In terms of an academic major/concentration, I have
- determined what all the requirements are and the deadlines by which things must be done, for the major I have chosen. (1)
- investigated the basic requirements for graduating with a degree in my academic major. (2)
- a general idea about the courses and other requirements needed in my major. (3)
- not paid much attention to the requirements for my major; I depend on my advisor or others to tell me what to take. (4)
- yet to decide on an academic major. (5)

Over the past twelve months at this college, I have
- taken the initiative to set up conferences with an academic advisor. (1)
- kept appointments with an academic advisor when she/he scheduled them. (2)
- avoided dealing with my academic advisor. (3)
- not investigated how to obtain academic advising. (4)
- not been at this college long enough to get involved in academic advising. (5)
I have a mature working relationship with one or more members of the academic community (faculty member, student affairs/services staff member, administrator).

- Yes. (1)
- No, I don't like dealing with them. (2)
- No, I have tried to form relationships, but haven't been successful yet. (3)
- No, I don't know any. (4)
- No, I don't have time for that kind of thing. (5)

Within the past twelve months,

- I haven't attended any non-required lectures, programs, or activities dealing with serious intellectual subjects. (1)
- I have attended one or two non-required lectures or programs dealing with serious intellectual subjects. (2)
- I have attended three or four lectures or programs dealing with a serious intellectual subjects that were not required for any of my courses. (3)
- I have attended five or more lectures or programs dealing with serious intellectual subjects which were not required for any of my courses. (4)

In addition to my academic studies,

- I spend much of my free time involved in organized activities on campus or in the community. (1)
- I spend most of my free time "goofing off" or watching TV. (2)
- I spend most of my free time with friends doing things we enjoy. (3)
- I spend most of my time working to support myself and/or caring for my family. (4)

I have formed a personal relationship (friendly acquaintance-ship) with one or more professors.

- Yes, but I find it difficult to talk to him/her (them). (1)
- Yes, we often enjoy interacting with each other. (2)
- No, I would like to but haven't taken any action. (3)
- No, I would like to and have tried unsuccessfully. (4)
- No, because that isn't important to me. (5)

I have been actively engaged in a student organization or college committee in the past 6 months.

- Yes (1)
- No, I don't have time because of my job(s) and/or family responsibilities (2)
- No, I am not interested. (3)
- No, I haven't been in college long enough. (4)
- No, but I plan to do so soon. (5)
Within the past three months, I have had a serious discussion with a faculty member concerning something of importance to me.

- No, I don't like talking to faculty members. (1)
- No, I have tried, but was unsuccessful. (2)
- No, I haven't found one who seemed willing to interact in that way. (3)
- Yes, I initiated such a discussion. (4)
- Yes, I responded to a faculty members initiative. (5)

While in college I have participated in practical experience directly related to my educational goals through an internship, part-time work, summer job, or similar employment.

- No, I haven't been enrolled long enough. (1)
- No, I haven't thought about it very much. (2)
- No, I have yet to establish any specific educational goals. (3)
- Yes, I did it to satisfy program requirement. (4)
- Yes, I did it on my own initiative. (5)

I carefully investigated the intellectual abilities and necessary academic background needed to be successful in my chosen academic major.

- No, I have yet to make a definite decision about an academic major/concentration. (1)
- No, I chose my major/concentration solely on the basis of what I enjoyed most. (2)
- No, I have narrowed the choice down to a few areas, but I haven't really investigated majors in that way. (3)
- No, I never thought about it in that way. (4)
- Yes. (5)

Within the past three months I have read a non-required publication related to my major field of study.

- No, I have yet to decide on an academic major/field of study. (1)
- No, I don’t have time to read such things. (2)
- No, that would be too boring. (3)
- Yes. (4)

Within the past twelve months I have had a serious conversation about my long-term educational objectives with an academic advisor or other college official.

- No, I don't know to whom to talk. (1)
- No, I have tried but no one will help me. (2)
- No, but I want to do that. (3)
- No, I don't want my options limited. (4)
- Yes. (5)