Abstract: This study examines the interaction of demographic factors like race, class, first-generation status, and gender with perceptions of the availability and accessibility of leadership positions on campus. This case study focuses on F&M specifically and includes two waves of quantitative survey data as well as interviews. Results show that race is a statistically significant predictor of student perceptions, with non-White students being less likely than their White peers to be student leaders, to perceive themselves as leaders, and to have positive perceptions of the leadership opportunity structure. Class, first-generation status, and gender were not statistically significant predictors.
Diversity and Leadership: Perceptions and Experiences of the Campus Leadership

Opportunity Structure

Students of color, of low socioeconomic status, and of first-generation status are underrepresented in prestigious and high-paying sectors of the American workforce; those same groups are also underrepresented at elite colleges (Bial 2016; Wilbur and Roscigno 2016). On campuses such as that of Franklin & Marshall College, initiatives to increase the diversity of the student body, like the transition to need-based aid programs, have been successful in bringing more low-income and racial minority students to campus. However, minority-group students are less likely than their dominant-group counterparts to take full advantage of all aspects of the college experience, such as accessing extracurricular leadership opportunities (Lee 2015). Thus, increasing the presence of a minority demographic group on campus does not necessarily translate to an increase in diversity in student leadership.

This study will investigate whether race, socioeconomic status, and first-generation status play a role in how F&M students perceive themselves as leaders and perceive the opportunity structure with respect to leadership opportunities on campus, and whether these perceptions vary by gender within racial groups. Leadership in college is key to developing the kinds of cultural capital that are most valued in the workforce (Mitchell, Armstrong, and Arum 2008:133); therefore, understanding how race, class, and first-generation status impact perceptions of the importance of extracurricular activities, self-confidence in regards to one’s leadership ability, and perceptions of available opportunities is necessary to fully understand the factors that influence success in the workforce after college, specifically in relation to the reproduction of cultural capital and, by extension, the reproduction of race and class segregation in the workforce. The results could also offer practical information about possible avenues through
which institutions can increase diversity in student leadership and how they can best support the students who are most likely to feel that they are at a disadvantage on campus.

This research follows a case study format, examining the dynamics of race, class, first-generation status, and leadership on F&M’s campus. There are many factors which vary by institution and which may affect students’ likelihood of engaging in extracurricular activities, such as the size of the student body, the number and type of leadership opportunities available, and institutional efforts to encourage involvement; for example, F&M’s class schedule allows most classes to end before 4:30 PM, following which students have more common time to engage with student organizations. Although it is hypothesized that many of the same relationships between demographic factors and leadership that are found on F&M’s campus would be found on other college campuses as well, this study focuses on the nuances of F&M’s campus leadership opportunity structure, which allows for an analysis of whether F&M’s numerous mentoring and support programs—such as Posse, Next Generation, College Prep, and Gray Scholars\textsuperscript{1}—have a positive effect on the likelihood of participants to take advantage of leadership opportunities in relation to their counterparts who are not involved in such programs. For instance, the Posse scholarship, which is a full-tuition scholarship for a group of ten students who form a support network for each other, stresses the importance of leadership and involvement in the community. Scholarship recipients are selected in part on the basis of their leadership and involvement and are encouraged to continue that involvement on campus.

Previous studies on the Gates Millennium Scholarship—the goal of which is to help low-income students of color get to and through college, emerging as leaders—have shown that

\textsuperscript{1} The Posse scholarship is merit-based, Next Generation is designed for first-generation students, College Prep targets underserved communities, and the Gray Scholars program is need-based. Nonetheless, on F&M’s campus, the students who participate in such programs, need-based or not, are more likely than the general student body to be of low socioeconomic status and to be students of color.
participants in such programs are much more likely to engage in campus life than their low-income, racial minority, non-participant counterparts (Hu 2011:516). Such leadership-based financial aid programs may mitigate the effects of demographic factors like race, class, and first-generation status on the likelihood of extracurricular involvement on campus. An analysis of these programs may help to evaluate whether current initiatives to support diversity on campus are effective in accomplishing their goal of integrating students into the campus community and supporting them throughout their college journey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on Ken Roberts’ theory of occupational opportunity structures and how they reproduce social inequalities (1968). Roberts studied young people’s transition from school to work and determined that aspirations for status attainment in the workforce were strongly influenced by one’s social position within the objective structure of the labor market (1968). Opportunity structure theory dictates that because certain ascribed characteristics, such as race, class, and gender, are accompanied by advantages or disadvantages in the labor market, an individual’s social position based on such characteristics shapes their ambitions for status attainment in the labor market (Roberts 1968). These aspirations are molded by personal experiences of either constraint or opportunity based on ascribed characteristics and the experiences of one’s social reference group, such as family members and neighbors; for instance, young people whose parents have professional occupations are more likely to perceive a wider range of opportunity available to them in the job market than young people whose parents are in the working-class (Furlong, Biggart, and Cartmel 1996). Possessing characteristics that constitute a disadvantage in the workforce leads to lower occupational aspirations, thus reproducing of patterns of inequality among disadvantaged populations (Roberts 1968).
The same theoretical framework of the effects of opportunity structures on individuals’ aspirations can be applied to leadership opportunities on college campuses. Such ascribed characteristics as race, class, gender, and first-generation status—and previous experiences of the advantages or disadvantages associated with those characteristics—may shape individuals’ aspirations for status attainment on campus and can affect their likelihood of pursuing leadership opportunities while on campus. Perceptions of a closed opportunity structure that offers few opportunities or only offers opportunities to a privileged social group may reduce the likelihood that an individual will pursue and attain leadership positions on campus, thus limiting students’ access to the attendant benefits of campus leadership.

Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction outlines how opportunity structure theory may be applicable to a college campus: If experiences such as leadership in college serve as opportunities to develop social and cultural capital that will increase students’ chances of success later in the workforce, then individuals’ perceptions of the leadership opportunity structure on campus can either encourage or inhibit students’ development of social and cultural capital while on campus. Social capital is a set of social connections that indicates membership in a particular group and which carries a certain amount of economic value and cultural capital is a set of skills and knowledge about how to navigate a specific social context—in this case, the social world of the elite, or the White upper-class (Bourdieu 1986). Cultural capital is often necessary to build social capital, as certain styles of interaction, such as formal speech and writing, are valued by high-status groups and individuals and may be necessary to access those social worlds (Bourdieu 1986). While social and cultural capital is initially transmitted through family, or through primary socialization into particular class cultures “in order to hide its selective transmission, protect its value, and disguise its profits as outcomes of merit and talent,” it can also be acquired
in educational institutions (Bourdieu 1986:243).

Institutions of higher education serve as “incubators for the development of competent social actors,” which encompasses more than a formal education in a specific field of study; it also requires a social and cultural education regarding skills that are rewarded in the workplace, such as knowing how to write a resume, how to act in a job interview, and how to speak to a superior in a professional setting (Mitchell, Armstrong, and Arum 2008:128). These are all skills one learns mainly through experience and through interaction with others who have obtained those skills. Moreover, higher education institutions shape “the number, quality, and type of social ties that particular individuals and groups enjoy,” which is associated with success after college because social ties are a form of capital that carries both economic and societal value (Mitchell, Armstrong, and Arum 2008:131). Institutions of higher education offer the context for “the development of cultural capital in ways that are useful for establishing an upper-middle-class life” as well as a valuable social network (Mitchell, Armstrong, and Arum 2008:131).

One’s social class shapes one’s habitus, which is the internalization of values that shapes one’s perceptions of what is possible for them and their attitudes towards social structures (Bourdieu 1986). Those students who have less access to social and cultural capital develop a habitus that leads to lower aspirations, which influences their behaviors and self-conception. By the time students get to college, their habitus has been shaped by their social class so that middle- and upper-class students are more likely to see success as a realistic and expected outcome of their efforts while lower-class students are more likely to have internalized the objective structures that disadvantage them in the economic world. For instance, Hoxby and Avery’s landmark national study in 2013 demonstrated that most high-achieving, low-income students do not even apply to selective schools despite being qualified for admissions; the researchers found
that income rather than achievement was the best predictor of application behaviors (Hoxby and Avery 2013). This provides some evidence that low-income students internalize negative perceptions of the college access opportunity structure, which influences their behaviors. Even those low-income students who do apply to and attend selective schools may have developed negative perceptions of the occupational opportunity structure, if not the college access opportunity structure, and they may therefore have negative perceptions of the leadership opportunity structure on campus.

Why Focus on College Leadership?

Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction claims that culture is the means by which class statuses are reproduced. Forms of capital are differentially distributed among social class groups and are conferred along familial lines to maintain that unequal distribution and sustain the power of the elite over the lower classes (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, culture is the weapon of the elite in the class conflict over resources, or capital. Academic qualifications, such as a college degree, are an institutionalized form of cultural capital. Because “the educational system seems to award its honors solely to natural qualities,” this serves to mask the selective transmission of capital (Bourdieu 1986:25). Although natural qualities or merit may play a role, economic capital is needed to attain high levels of education—for example, to pay college tuition—and social and cultural capital are needed to succeed in the social world of higher education and in prestigious sectors of the workforce; educational qualifications are “the condition for legitimate access to a growing number of positions, particularly the dominant ones,” so those with the economic, social, and cultural capital to get to and through college are the most likely to achieve high-status, well-paying positions in the workforce, thus reproducing class divisions (Bourdieu 1986:26). While it may seem intuitive that increasing access to higher education for the lower
classes would interrupt this process of social reproduction, Bourdieu argues that the elite will simply adapt by devising new ways to disguise the selective transmission of capital, and therefore interrupting the process of social reproduction requires “bringing to light the arbitrariness of the entitlements transmitted and of their transmission” (1986:26).

However, Bourdieu also points out that cultural capital is being transmitted through the myth of the meritocracy, or the widespread belief that academic credentials are awarded on merit rather than ascribed characteristics like class, which makes it difficult to prove the selective transmission of capital (1986). Current efforts to interrupt the process of social reproduction therefore do not take this Bourdieusian approach; instead, they revolve around expanding college access and thereby expanding access to valued forms of social and cultural capital. This is the interpretation most commonly used in sociology of education (Drebeen 1968; Apple 1982; Apple and Weis 1983; Young 1971; Cazden and Mehan 1989; Mehan 1992). There are “certain ways of talking, thinking, and acting…demanded by the conventions of schooling” that are aligned with the “discourse patterns and socialization practices of upper-income and middle-income families” (Mehan et al. 1996:79). Middle- and upper-class students’ cultural capital provides the “skills and techniques that are rewarded in lessons and on tests” and their social capital, or the knowledge of their family and community members regarding what is expected of college-bound students, prepares them for educational and occupational success (Mehan et al. 1996:80). Lower-income students, “especially those from linguistic and ethnic minority backgrounds,” do not have these same cultural and social resources, but the class advantage that middle- and upper-class students have are “so taken for granted as to appear natural” (Mehan et al. 1996:79-80).

In the current discourse on college access programs, structural barriers for lower-income and racial minority students are acknowledged, but the value of an American meritocracy is
never in question; rather, expanding college access is a matter of living up to American values (Bial 2016). Helping low-income students get to college, acquire cultural capital and become upwardly mobile—which is the intent of most current programming to expand college access, as well as the focus of F&M’s diversity initiatives (Porterfield 2017)—is seen as the main if not the only way of leveling the playing field for individuals of different social classes (Bial 2016). While Bourdieu may disagree, this approach has merit, especially if, as the literature suggests, low-income racial minority students have a greater orientation towards using positions of power to achieve social justice; this will be discussed in further detail later in the literature review (Harper and Quaye 2007; Reid 2013). Thus, if college leadership positions do develop social and cultural capital that can later be converted to economic capital in the labor market, then initiatives to expand college access and encourage diversity in leadership can contribute to greater social equality—and there is indeed literature that suggests leadership positions in college contribute to the development of social and cultural capital.

Leadership is an easily recognizable construct, meaning the term is widely used in our lexicon, but it is not particularly well defined (Burns 1978). Traditionally, leadership skills are associated with individual qualities such as one’s ability to command control, power, and authority as well as one’s rationality and management skills (Rogers 2003; Rost 1993). By this definition, leaders are a select few. However, more recent definitions of leadership conceive of leaders as those who use positive human relations and shared goals to engage in “process-oriented, transformative, value-centered, non-coercive, and collaborative” work for the purpose of “social responsibility and change for the common good” (Dugan 2006:218; 219). In practical terms, Heinz College at the University of Carnegie Mellon defines leadership skills, which they promote and teach to their students, as “the ability to diagnose problems, make effective
decisions, influence and motivate others, and systematically put everyone’s skills to good use, including one’s own to successfully execute the team’s goals” (Leadership and Negotiation Academy for Women 2017). In a survey of more than 400 employers across the US, Lombardi and Lahey found that employers define leadership as the skills necessary to fulfill management positions (2013); similarly, in a survey of 185 business organizations, Kelly found that employers define leadership as “creativity, team building, effective communication, conflict management” (2012:4). Under these definitions, which revolve around practical skill development rather than perceived natural abilities like authoritativeness, leadership is more accessible.

If institutions of higher education and employers alike conceive of leadership as a set of skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, as well as a specific style of interaction, like positive human relations, then leadership ability is a form of cultural capital because cultural capital is, by definition, a set of skills and styles of interaction that help one navigate a certain social world—in this case, the world of professional employment. Leadership in college is therefore a major channel through which cultural capital can be acquired and social capital cultivated. Research on engagement and leadership in college shows that “high-impact curricular activities” such as leadership opportunities offer chances to network with those in positions of power and to develop the styles of interaction that are valued in the workplace, such as middle- and upper-class speech patterns (Wilbur and Roscigno 2016). Being a student leader, as opposed to engaging with student organizations only as a member, offers experience in more specialized tasks like budget management and event planning and exposes students to situations in which they must collaborate with others to achieve the goals of their organization, which develop the kind of leadership skills employers are looking for (Lombardi and Lahey 2013; Kelly 2012). In a
survey of 27 professionals who served in leadership roles in college, skills learned through leadership experience were cited as a source of improved confidence, critical thinking, teamwork, speaking skills, and interpersonal skills, all of which benefitted them when they entered the workforce (Congos and Stout 2003).

Casner-Lotto and Barrington’s research even indicates that employers deem “applied skills” like leadership abilities to be more important than basic knowledge and that these applied skills are an essential hiring criterion (2006:9). Thus, it is important to note that even though the actual skills developed through college leadership positions are important to employers and therefore to future success in the labor market, the use of leadership ability as a hiring criterion makes the credentials of having leadership experience—for instance, being able to list one’s presidency in a student organization on one’s resume—equally important in terms of labor market outcomes, as this affects hiring decisions regardless of the value of that specific leadership position in terms of skill-building. Kuhn and Weinberger’s research illustrates this point; they found that leadership experience in school increases one’s chances of being hired for management positions in the workforce and has been linked to higher wages (2005).

Therefore, if students have differential access to leadership positions in college or perceive that leadership opportunities are not equally accessible to all, this can affect their labor market outcomes after graduation. Students who arrive on campus already possessing middle-class cultural capital are more likely than their counterparts to take on leadership roles and to build social ties with people in positions of authority on campus; when interacting with those in positions of authority who “act as gatekeepers to resources or jobs” (Pappano 2015), having middle-class styles of interaction can be just as important as one’s academic knowledge and practical skills, so those students who build social ties with authority figures increase their
likelihood of accessing internships, fellowships, jobs, and other opportunities—not all of which are publicized to students—that can further develop social and cultural capital (Jack 2016:14). Acquisition of cultural capital in turn bolsters feelings of self-confidence and efficacy, which makes students more likely to seek out leadership opportunities in the future (Aries and Seider 2005). In their study of college students’ perceptions of their leadership skills, Dugan and Komives found that leadership efficacy, or one’s confidence in their ability to lead others, increased significantly throughout college for students who participated in campus leadership through clubs and organizations, even if their leadership involvement was only short-term (2007).

This creates a cycle in which some students are better able to engage in and reap the benefits of college leadership opportunities than others. Students who “feel excluded by virtue of their racialized, ethnic, [or] socioeconomic... statuses” are least likely to take part in campus extracurricular life and to become student leaders, limiting their acquisition of cultural capital that is valued in high-status sectors of the workforce (Lee 2015:2). Campus diversity initiatives bring racial and socioeconomic diversity to campus, but they do not necessarily encourage students with those marginalized identities to engage in the aspects of college life which build crucial social and cultural skills, which “has implications for lifelong consequences regarding family formation, job acquisition, and network development” (Jack 2014:455; Lee 2015).

**Socioeconomic Status**

By the time students get to college, they have a developed cultural toolkit, or a set of skills and understandings about their social environment, which shapes their “strategies of action” for how they navigate the social, academic, and professional spheres (Swidler 1986:273). The cultural toolkit that middle- and upper-class students bring to college with them is stocked
with valuable forms of cultural capital that helps them navigate the college environment. Working-class students do not have the same cultural capital, reducing their access to leadership positions that cultivate self-efficacy and provide practical experience for resume-building, which can be converted into economic capital in the workplace. In Stuber’s interviews with 61 college students—31 from a large state university and 30 from a small liberal arts college—she found “that upper-middle-class students arrive on campus with cultural resources that motivate their participation and social resources that facilitate their involvement” while working-class students’ involvement on campus was limited by financial, social, and cultural resources (2009:877).

Annette Lareau’s study of the effects of social class on children’s lives in Unequal Childhoods offers some insight into how this difference in cultural resources develops: Lareau found that upper- and middle-class children tend to develop a “sense of entitlement” that allows them to manage their interactions in institutional settings and enables them to make the system work in their favor (2003:6). Working-class and poor children tend to develop a “sense of constraint,” which leads them to feel powerless and frustrated, often with a sense of opposition to powerful institutions (Lareau 2003:7). The different class-based methods of child-rearing that Lareau identifies—concerted cultivation in upper- and upper-middle-class families and accomplishment of natural growth in working- and lower-class families—encourage individuals of different social classes to internalize different messages about extracurricular involvement from a young age (2003).

As a result, even if all students on a given college campus had the same level of access to leadership opportunities—that is, assuming there were no institutional or economic barriers to involvement—not all students would necessarily have the same skills and cultural understandings to effectively find and attain leadership positions. Upper- and upper-middle-class
college students tend to see leadership involvement as normal and expected, arriving already primed to embody the “dominant campus style of sociability,” while students of lower socioeconomic status tend to believe that extracurricular involvement is not desirable or useful because it is a distraction from the primary purpose of college—academics (Mitchell, Armstrong, and Arum 2008:133; Stuber 2009). Privileged students are more likely to explain their leadership involvement in terms of utility—for example, skill-building and professional development—and resume-building in an effort to make themselves marketable in their desired occupational field. They view this as part of the essential college experience and actively engage “authority figures to develop support networks and to extract key assets, like recommendation letters, research assistantships, and access to authority figures’ professional and personal networks” (Jack 2016:6). Working-class students are more likely to be unaware of the benefits of extracurricular and leadership involvement, which is positively correlated with higher retention rates, academic success, feelings of social integration, and the development of useful leadership skills (Stuber 2009; Hu 2011).

The development of cultural capital often requires an investment of time and funds—which upper-class students are more likely to have. For example, styles of dress are a form of cultural capital; understanding what “business-casual” or “business-formal” means, and being able to dress accordingly, is a form of knowledge that is socially valued, particularly in the workplace. However, this requires an investment of funds to acquire a “business” wardrobe. Other forms of cultural capital include styles of interaction, such as sending a thank-you email after a job interview, and speech patterns, such as enunciation, pronunciation, vocabulary, and understanding certain terminology—for example, knowing what “office hours” entail on a college campus (Lareau and Weininger 2003). An investment of time is necessary to develop
some of this cultural capital, like building vocabulary by reading. Therefore, middle- and upper-class students have resources that help them acquire cultural capital throughout their lifetime, which is necessary to access the pathways to high-status jobs.

This results in differential chances of success based on one’s socioeconomic status. For instance, middle- and upper-class students often have access to career counselors in high school who can help develop skills like interviewing, which involves understanding a specific style of interaction, while schools in low-income areas often do not offer these services (Bardwell 2012; French 2015). Rivera’s interviews with 120 employers along with observations of hiring committee deliberations at elite professional service firms revealed that cultural styles of interaction during interviews are crucial to hiring decisions; employers specifically look for cultural similarities between themselves and the interviewee “in terms of leisure pursuits, experiences, and self-presentation styles,” and these similarities were a more important factor in hiring decisions than skill and productivity (2012:999). Students of lower socioeconomic status, who often hail from overcrowded schools in low-income neighborhoods, have had less access to important resources such as career counselors through which they could have acquired cultural capital, such as learning the desired styles of interaction at an interview, which Rivera found was crucial to labor market outcomes (2012). This places low-income students at a financial and cultural disadvantage by the time they get to campus, which may make them less likely to engage in leadership positions.

This point is exemplified by the success that some pipeline and enrichment programs have had in developing the cultural capital of low-income students prior to college. Programs such as A Better Chance, a national initiative to place low-income students in elite boarding, preparatory, and day schools, allow low-income students to acquire the cultural resources valued
at institutions of higher education, which lessens their culture shock during the transition from high school to college and leads to a greater degree of comfort on campus and greater engagement with the campus community (Jack 2015; Jack 2014). In his study of low-income Black undergraduate students at a progressive college, Anthony Jack found that pipeline program students adopt “engagement strategies” rather than the “isolationist strategies” of their low-income peers who did not attend pipeline programs; pipeline students are more likely to join clubs and take on student leadership roles (Jack 2014:467). When pipeline and enrichment programs invest resources in low-income students, they develop similar strategies and perceptions of the importance of campus involvement as their high-income peers.

Working-class students face the additional burden of low self-confidence in relation to their privileged peers. Although most of the working-class students in Stuber’s study—both those from a state college and those from an elite private school—were involved in extracurricular activities throughout their high school experience, they described their experiences as less valuable than the experiences of their more privileged peers. They believed that their upper-class classmates’ experiences provided more useful academic and professional benefits than their own extracurricular experiences, so the experiences of their peers had more currency in the collegiate environment than their own. The competitive environment and new social setting lessened their confidence in their own abilities (Stuber 2009). Other studies have found that this lack of confidence due to class differences is even more pronounced on elite college campuses, where working-class students are more likely to experience feelings of “inadequacy, inferiority, intimidation, exclusion and powerlessness” in relation to their wealthy classmates (Aries and Seider 2005:426; Jack 2014). By the same token, the acquisition of middle-class cultural capital was accompanied by “diminished feelings of difference,
inadequacy, and exclusion” and increased feelings of “self-confidence and self-respect” for working-class students (Aries and Seider 2005:432). This means that lower-income students typically have lower levels of self-efficacy—defined as a sense of confidence in one’s leadership abilities—which makes them less likely to be involved in campus life and therefore less likely to be student leaders; however, programs that cultivate their cultural capital have the potential to change their habitus, making them feel more confident in the opportunities available to them.

Students of low socioeconomic status face many barriers to campus involvement: they may not be able to afford taking unpaid internships or sacrificing time away from work to engage in extracurricular activities, they may not be able to afford Greek membership or membership in other useful social networks, they often do not have the cultural capital and parental support to help them locate opportunities, and they experience a lack of confidence in their leadership abilities in relation to their peers. These barriers limit working-class students’ access to the valuable cultural capital that can be acquired through leadership opportunities. However, there are two factors which may attenuate the effects of class on leadership and involvement: scholarship programs that provide both financial aid and mentoring, and residential requirements. The working-class students in Stuber’s study who found leadership opportunities learned of them through scholarship programs on their campus, indicating that support programs for working-class students can play a significant role in integrating those students into campus life and encouraging engagement (2009). Moreover, of the two schools from which Stuber drew her sample, only one required students to live on campus; working-class students at this school were more likely to be involved than their counterparts at the other school because they were exposed to more diverse social networks and more opportunities for involvement. (2009). A later study also found that residential campuses ameliorate some of the effects of class on campus
involvement by producing greater feelings of formal inclusion into the campus community despite feelings of exclusion based on demographic factors (Stuber 2015).

Race and Ethnicity

As previously mentioned, disadvantaged students tend to feel less confident in their academic and leadership abilities compared to their privileged peers (Stuber 2009), meaning they have lower levels of self-efficacy. One’s sense of self-efficacy is derived from four sources: previous experiences, the presence of role models, verbal and social messages of affirmation, and physiological and psychological states (Reid 2013:77). Racial minority students, in addition to their low-income peers discussed above, tend to be disadvantaged in all four of these areas and are less likely to have developed a positive sense of self-efficacy compared to their White peers; lower self-efficacy leads to lower rates of involvement on campus (Reid 2013).

Previous experiences: There are several demographic factors that make Black and Hispanic students more likely to arrive on campus less socially and academically prepared than their White and Asian peers. Across the nation, Asian and White students are far more likely to come from middle-to-high-income households than their Black and Hispanic peers (Fischer 2007). On average, over 60% of their college costs are covered by family resources while Black and Hispanic students are much more dependent on aid: Less than half of their costs are covered by family resources (Fischer 2007). As a result, financial aid is one of the most significant factors in encouraging the social engagement of racial minority students because it reduces the likelihood that they will have to work during college (St. John, Rowley, and Hu 2009).²

Black and Hispanic students are also more likely to come from high schools with poor infrastructure—often indicating poorer academic preparation for college courses—and to be

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² F&M, since 2008, meets all students’ full demonstrated financial need. According to the literature, this may work to even the playing field, as it puts less strain on family contribution for racial minority students.
first-generation students compared to their White and Asian peers (Fischer 2007). First-generation students, who will be described in greater detail in a later section, are less likely to have familial support and tend to have a harder time adjusting to college life than their peers who have more familial support (Fischer 2007). Thus, the financial and social background of Black and Hispanic students puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to campus involvement, diminishing their ability to accumulate the cultural and social capital that comes with leadership and engagement, although scholarship programs can mitigate these factors.

**Role models:** Mentoring relationships with faculty are beneficial to all students, as these relationships lead to greater feelings of belonging, increased campus involvement, and increased academic achievement, but they are especially important for racial minority students whose “backgrounds are less congruent with the majority on campus” (Fischer 2007:154). However, it may be more difficult for students of color to build these mentoring relationships with faculty than it is for their White peers due to the underrepresentation of people of color within college faculty. This can foster feelings of “onlyness,” or the “psychological burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one’s safe race or ethnic group” (Truong, McMickens, and Brown 2015:19). The lack of potential role models for students of color thereby lessens their chances of engaging in a mentoring relationship and reaping the attendant benefits.

**Cultural differences:** The cultural and social messages that students receive about leadership on campus are constructed based on American styles and ideals of leadership, which are significantly different from those of other cultures. For instance, many American Indian cultures traditionally have their leaders chosen by the tribe; individuals typically don’t assert themselves as leaders if not chosen (St. John, Rowley, and Hu 2009:18). Unsurprisingly,
American Indian students are the racial minority group least likely to be engaged in campus life or in leadership roles (Hu 2011). Similarly, some Asian cultures hold traditional values of “deference to authority and humility” that are incongruent with American styles of leadership, making Asian Americans the most likely racial group to feel “culturally marginalized from the leadership role” and the least likely to identify as leaders (Kodama 2014:5; Balón 2005; Hu 2011). These self-perceptions vary by ethnic group; in a survey over 2,000 Asian American students from 88 colleges across the US, Kodama found that, although the variations between groups were small, Chinese American students had the lowest levels of leadership self-efficacy while Indian/Pakistani American students had the highest (2014). However, racial stereotypes and students’ beliefs about how non-Asian Americans perceive their leadership abilities were the most influential factors in developing leadership self-efficacy and in taking on leadership roles, even if the individual did feel comfortable serving in a leadership role (Kwon 2009; Kodama 2014). Because non-Asian Americans tend to see Asian Americans as a monolithic group and tend to associate Asian Americans with being “quiet, subservient, and socially awkward,” these stereotypes are internalized by Asian Americans regardless of ethnic identity—although there are small variations by ethnic group in the extent to which these stereotypes are internalized—which affects leadership behaviors (Kodama 2014:128; Choi 2010; Kodama et al. 2002; Lo 2011; Tran and Chang 2013). As a result, Asian American students are likely to have low levels of leadership self-efficacy, or “levels of confidence in the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with leading others” (Hannah et al. 2008:1; Balón 2005; Dugan et al. 2008; Dugan and Komives 2010; Dugan et al. 2013; Kodama and Dugan 2013). Leadership self-efficacy is highly correlated with aspirations and leadership behaviors—for example, serving in leadership roles (Hannah et al. 2008; Machida and Schaubroeck 2011). Because Asian American students are likely to
believe that others do not see them as leaders, they are less likely to see themselves as competent leaders and less likely to engage in leadership roles (Hu 2011).

Other racial minority groups, like Black and Latino students, are affected by “stereotype-vulnerability;” this theory states that racial minority students fear they will confirm a negative stereotype about their race if they perform poorly, and the resulting stress makes them more likely to underperform regardless of their ability (Steele 2010; Bowen and Bok 1998). The lack of academic confidence among racial minority students is apparent on F&M’s campus, as evidenced by the results of informal interviews I conducted for a separate academic project in 2014. One student of color, when asked about his level of confidence in his academic performance, responded:

“I walk in with a lot of self-doubt, although I do know a lot of the information… When I hear about others doing better than I am, then I’m kind of like, ‘Oh, man, am I that black guy who shouldn’t be here? Am I not doing enough work? Am I not as good as my counterparts?’”
-Black male sophomore (Plaza 2014)

Another student—a black female sophomore—echoed these sentiments when she said, “I’m always the only black female in all of my classes… I question, sometimes, my capabilities” (Plaza 2014). Racial minority students may also feel that, despite their credentials and experience, they will perform poorly in leadership positions relative to White students, making them less likely to seek out and attain leadership positions. Students who are not worried about fulfilling a negative stereotype may be more confident in their abilities and more likely to take advantage of leadership opportunities than their counterparts with the same credentials.

**Physiological and psychological states:** Many students of color who come from neighborhoods with a non-White majority experience culture shock, or feelings of displacement, when they transition to the White-majority environment of a college campus (Fischer 2007).
They may feel that they are “subverting their identity” by “becoming involved in the mainstream campus or assimilating,” which conflicts with their desire to maintain strong cultural connections to their racial/ethnic group (Harper and Quaye 2007:130). These students end up trying to straddle two communities: They try to maintain off-campus ties while still maintaining their social and academic lives on campus.

Several scholars argue that this ‘straddling’ is particularly important to consider for Hispanic students, who are more likely to maintain family and community ties, which serve as both a crucial support system as well as a source of pressure to balance home and campus life (Hurtado and Carter 1997; Gloria et al. 2009; Reyes and Nora 2012). This experience carries a significant amount of psychological stress, as it can be a difficult balance to strike; for some racial groups—particularly Black students—maintaining off-campus ties is correlated with lower levels of campus engagement, lower academic achievement, and higher levels of attrition (Fischer 2007). Racial minority students who build social and cultural networks on campus have more positive experiences than their counterparts who do not. These subcultural spaces, often provided by cultural clubs and student groups, offer a space of safety, a friendship group, and a network of academic resources that assist students of color in transitioning to a predominantly White campus (Reid 2013; Fischer 2007).

*Black students’ involvement:* As discussed in the previous section, there are many factors that may discourage students of color from engaging with campus life, but there is one notable exception. Of all racial minority groups, African American students are most likely to be engaged in campus life and in leadership roles and to develop strong ties with faculty members (St. John, Rowley, and Hu 2009). This has led some researchers to dub Black students the “model minority” for campus leadership (St. John, Rowley, and Hu 2009:22). These leadership
trends have historical roots in the Civil Rights Movement, during which Black communities emphasized “consciousness of self, controversy with civility, citizenship,” and a motivation to work for social change (Hu 2011:516). Higher levels of engagement among Black students are also related to the more developed Black student communities on college campuses; for example, organizations like the Black Student Union, cultural housing units, academic departments like Africana Studies, and the fact that Black students can easily identify one another on campus provide a level of social support and a path to integration that is not available to others, like low-income White students (Aries 2013:23).

Cultural student organizations also play a crucial role for Black students’ involvement. While they do participate in mainstream organizations, they are much more likely to take on leadership roles in Black student organizations and minority-majority student groups (Harper and Quaye 2007:134). In Harper and Quaye’s interviews with Black student leaders, many students described the importance of Black student organizations as venues through which to work for social change, uplift the community, dispel negative stereotypes, and break down barriers for other Black students (2007). Their campus involvement takes on a distinctly activist agenda. Still, many interviewees acknowledged the importance of being involved in mainstream student organizations as well. They recognized that Black students are underrepresented in those organizations and that those groups tend to have more resources and funding, which they could access “on behalf of Black and minority student groups” once they had a voice in event planning (Harper and Quaye 2007:136). They recognized that student and faculty committees also lack Black student representation, which disadvantages racial minority students because their voices are not heard in institutional decision-making (Harper and Quaye 2007).

Moreover, they recognized the personal benefits of engaging in the mainstream. They
were keen on developing cross-cultural communication skills that will help them work with and connect to people of different backgrounds in their future occupations. Many were acutely aware of the global focus of major business enterprises and of the usefulness of ties to non-Black peers who will go on to fill high-status positions in business and government, fueling the impetus to build ties across racial and cultural lines (Harper and Quaye 2007). This is a smart move, considering that experiences with diversity are positively correlated with the “development of skills and competencies in working in teams, critical thinking, global competency,” as well as leadership, innovation, and productivity (Hu 2011:511). Learning to interact across cultural lines, or “learning cross-context,” is a useful exercise in acclimating to the norms and expectations of White society and developing strategies to navigate the discomfort of being an outsider (Truong, McMickens, and Brown 2015:23). But this is not a perfect strategy. Many Black students emphasized that “learning to deal with White people” is an important skill, but a more difficult endeavor than learning to interact positively with people of other races and many of their Black peers were unwilling to interact across racial and cultural lines (Harper and Quaye 2007).

Much of this resistance has to do with the negative psychological and social effects of being a racial minority on a campus with a negative racial climate. Black students are the most likely of any racial group to perceive a negative campus racial climate (Fischer 2007). To make matters worse, colleges and universities tend to respond to incidents of racial hostility on campus with blanket statements of diversity, inclusion, and support that are rooted in colorblind ideologies, which do not acknowledge the structural barriers that racial minority students face and instead focus on multicultural campus spaces (Brunsma, Embrick, and Thomas 2016). The negative climate is not just bad for Black students; it has a negative impact on students’ average satisfaction levels regardless of race (Fischer 2007), but it is the racial minority students who
incur the psychological harm of living in a hostile racial environment. The campus racial climate has a strong effect on students’ perceptions of “institutional fit” (Reid 2013:76). According to institutional integration theory, those students who receive institutional support, faculty attention, peer cohesion, and congruence with the norms of the campus are most likely to engage in campus life (Tinto 1993). For Black students, this integration—or lack thereof—has much to do with racial identity formation during college. Black students, and especially Black men, often have trouble reconciling their racial, social, and academic identities on campus (Reid 2013).

According to William Cross’s *Psychological Nigrescence* theory, many Black students experience a state of “immersion” in racial identity, during which they withdraw from White society and reject mainstream norms; others experience a state of “internalization” in which they understand their racial identity in relation to other races and to societal power structures, yet they do not perceive their race as being in conflict with their identity as students, leaders, and members of the campus community (Reid 2013; Harper and Quaye 2007). The identity conflict involved in the immersion state is highly correlated with leaving college (Harper and Quaye 2007). The internalization stage allows the student to develop cultural fluency, or an understanding of how to work within White society without compromising their Black identity, and it is often catalyzed by a role model in the student’s life (Reid 2013). Internalization is positively associated with social integration on campus, higher academic achievement, and greater interaction with faculty and peers (Reid 2013). It is also associated with greater empathy for other marginalized groups (Harper and Quaye 2007) and greater self-efficacy, which leads the individual to perceive more opportunities (Reid 2013). Those who have developed a positive racial identity are more likely to participate in student organizations, especially in Black student groups or minority-majority organizations (Harper and Quaye 2007).
Hispanic students’ experience: Although campus involvement is crucial to integration for all students, religious and community-oriented organizations play a bigger role in social integration for Hispanic students than others, offering opportunities to develop a sense of belonging that are aligned with Hispanic students’ ethnic identities—as, for instance, Hispanic students tend to be more religious than their counterparts (Fischer 2007). Hispanic students are more likely than their White counterparts to be first-generation students, to arrive less academically prepared, to depend on financial aid, and to work during college, all of which are factors that decrease involvement and increase the chances of leaving college (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). They are likely to experience culture shock due to the difficulty in identifying other Hispanic students on a college campus that is so heavily tied to Anglo-American norms and values, especially if they are from a Hispanic-majority hometown (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). These minority-majority hometown students often feel the most pressing need to find a social community on campus (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015).

One difficulty that Hispanic students face is the heterogeneity of their community; there are many negative stereotypes that some nationality groups hold against others on the basis of phenotype and vernacular language. There is a common perception that there are “two types of Latino/as: (1) lighter-skinned, affluent, educated Latino/as and (2) darker-skinned, working-class, uneducated, activist Latino/as” (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015:36). Despite these intra-community rifts, Hispanic students often feel their experiences are homogenized by administrators, faculty, and other students (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). Hispanic students are not as easily able to identify one another as Black students due to phenotypic variability. While Black students have the most social ties to students of their own race on campus, Hispanic students have the least (Fischer 2007). Due to the absence of a cohesive cultural community,
Hispanic students tend to do one of three things: withdraw from college life; reject mainstream organizations in favor of Latino student groups, which is common among low-income Hispanic students; or reject Latino student groups in favor of assimilating into mainstream organizations, which is common among students from predominantly White hometowns (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). Many students reject Latino groups because they “quickly learned that Latino/a student groups on campus were denigrated” (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015:36). However, those that originally rejected Latino/a organizations but joined later in college developed a greater sense of social integration, highlighting the importance of these groups for Hispanic students (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015).

*The intersection of race and class:* In practice, it is often difficult to separate race and class when analyzing the representation of particular groups in student leadership. In a study of the University of Oklahoma’s student leaders, Kayley Gillespie determined that race and socioeconomic status could not be analyzed separately in her data, since the vast majority of racial minority students fell into the lower- or lower-middle-class while White students were overrepresented in the upper-class (2014). Gillespie found that non-White, low-income students were least likely to occupy student leadership roles and lacked the “opportunity to participate in the university culture,” making them “less likely to reap leadership benefits” (2014:2).

This is important to consider in terms of Greek life membership. In a survey of over 9,000 college students from 15 Southeastern institutions, Long found that Greek membership increased students’ likelihood of being student leaders, defined as holding a position on the executive board of a student organization and that Greek membership may be especially beneficial for Black students (2012; Kimbrough 1995). Employers also respond positively to Greek membership when making hiring decisions and associate Greek membership with positive
personality traits like extraversion and leadership ability (Cole, Feild, and Giles 2003; Nemanick and Clark 2002; Long 2012). However, Greek life is designed to be exclusionary and there are particular barriers for low-income students, such as membership dues, and non-White students, such as the process of recruitment, during which new members must be approved by current members (Stuber, Klugman, and Daniel 2011). If, as the literature suggest, Greek life offers significant leadership opportunities, then low-income racial minority students are being disproportionately excluded from one major avenue for leadership, cultural capital, and social capital development.

The intersection of race and gender: There is an argument to be made for studying the effects of gender itself on leadership involvement: Women now outnumber men on many college campuses (Bradley 2000; Flashman 2013), but leadership in the workforce is still heavily gendered in a way that privileges traditionally masculine traits (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb 2011; De La Rey 2005). College men and women exhibit different styles of leadership, which may affect how they engage with student organizations and pursue and attain leadership roles (Harper and Quaye 2007; Paris et al. 2009; Wright 2011) and college women are less likely to perceive themselves as leaders and to believe they are competitive applicants for leadership positions than their male counterparts (Sax and Harper 2007). However, women are overrepresented both on F&M’s campus and within F&M’s student leadership (Franklin and Marshall College 2017). Because the potential barriers to women’s leadership cited in the literature do not appear to be affecting female students’ actions on F&M’s campus, it may be more useful to examine how race and gender interact to create disadvantages in the leadership opportunity structure.

In the workforce, women are generally less likely to hold leadership positions, but women of color experience greater difficulties than their White counterparts in attaining
leadership positions (American Association of University Women 2016). Moreover, races
themselves are gendered: Black individuals are stereotyped as being more masculine than other
races and Asian individuals are stereotyped as being more feminine than other races (American
Association of University Women 2016). Black men are stereotyped as aggressors, which may
limit the kinds of interactions they have on campus, influencing whether and how they engage in
campus life and leadership (Reid 2013). This, in combination with the racial identity formation
process that Black men experience, negatively affects Black men’s involvement on campus
(Reid 2013). Black women face different barriers to campus leadership opportunities: White
women and Black men are more likely to see their gender as an asset in their role as leaders
while Black women felt their gender was a detriment to their role as leaders (American
Psychological Association 2009). On the other hand, women of color are more likely to
understand leadership as collaborative and focused on positive change; Black women in
particular are more likely to engage in collaborative leadership (Haber 2012).

The dynamics are different for Hispanic women. In a qualitative study conducted by
members of the American Association of University Women, Hispanic women reported that
their race/ethnicity was not central to their identity as a leader, as opposed to Black men and
women, for whom race is a central feature of their identity as leaders (2016). The study
concluded that the stereotypes of Hispanic women as homemakers and caretakers prompted them
to distance themselves from their racial identity when seeking leadership positions and to adopt a
more individualistic perspective (American Association of University Women 2016). Hispanic
women experience a unique process of leadership identity development catalyzed by role models
and safe spaces in which stereotypes of Hispanic women can be dismantled and leadership can
be encouraged; their perception of leadership is based on self-development, with leadership
acting as an avenue for personal development (Santovec 2013). The effects of gendered racial stereotypes is evident in the study’s comparison of workplace penalties for Hispanic and Black women who display masculine behaviors like self-promotion and assertive language: Black women are not penalized as often for displaying these behaviors because they are seen as being more masculine by virtue of being Black while Hispanic women are dismissed as highly emotional when exhibiting these behaviors (American Association of University Women 2016).

**First-generation Status**

First-generation students are underrepresented at four-year colleges (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016). They are much less involved in the “cultural capital–laden activities” that college campuses offer compared to their peers, but the involvement in student organizations and engagement with faculty that these students lack are the most effective means of social integration and of acquiring skills and experience that will assist them in the workforce later on (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016).

First-generation students experience many of the same difficulties detailed in the previous sections for lower-income and racial minority students, as there is significant overlap between these groups. However, there is also a unique set of difficulties that comes with being a first-generation student. In a longitudinal study surveying 16,197 10th graders in 2002 and following up with those same students as 12th graders or dropouts in 2004, college students or dropouts in 2006, and graduates or dropouts in 2012, Wilbur and Roscigno estimate that difficulties and barriers related to race and class only account for about 75% of the negative outcomes first-generation students often experience, such as higher dropout rates and lower levels of involvement. Even as the average family income for a first-generation student increases, the disadvantages caused by being a first-generation student are not completely
removed, most likely due to lack of parental knowledge, cultural resources, and involvement in their child’s education (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016). “Cultural capital, college-related parental involvement, and student/parent savings” are all positively correlated with college retention and campus involvement; first-generation students are less likely than their peers to have these resources (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016:7) First-generation students are also more likely to live at home and to experience stressful life events, often related to family, during college (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016). These factors contribute to lower involvement, which is important to note considering that extracurricular involvement increases the likelihood of graduating by almost half (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016).

The parents of first-generation students are very limited in the cultural capital they can pass on. Students who are not first-generation are equipped with some degree of information about the college experience and often see college as “a continuation of their experience” in education thus far (Pappano 2015). First-generation students experience a culture shock on campus that results from not having parental guidance regarding the college application and college-going process (Pappano 2015). The lack of cultural capital prompts first-generation students to develop feelings of inadequacy that prevent them from engaging in campus life and developing a sense of self-efficacy (Aries and Seider 2005:440). Upper-class students are more likely to have a parent that went to college, so they arrive on campus with experiential information from family members regarding extracurricular, leadership, and resume-building opportunities and how involvement in these activities will be useful after graduation (Stuber 2009). These students are also exposed to their parents’, friends’, and acquaintances’ social networks, which eases their transition to college (Stuber 2009). Having at least one parent with a college degree and receiving financial support from one’s family increases the likelihood of
holding leadership positions both during and after college (Hu 2011). Working-class, first-generation students arrive on campus lacking the skills, experiential information, and vocabulary that their peers acquired through their families (Stuber 2009). They also lack financial resources and are more likely to work during college, lessening the amount of time they have for involvement in extracurricular activities (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016).

The difficulties that first-generation students face highlight the “role of familial disadvantage in the intergenerational transmission of inequality, usually through educational access and achievement” (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016:1). First-generation students often have to handle financial and emotional burdens related to leaving their families and the financial commitment of attending college, which increases their psychological stress (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016; Fischer 2007). Some first-generation students also lack parental support during their college careers, as parents of first-generation students may have class-based and cultural ideas about their role in their child’s education, causing them to be significantly less involved with their child’s decisions about education (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016). These students struggle to maintain a connection with their home communities, which proves to be more difficult for them than for other students due to feelings of guilt for leaving their families and feelings of loss as a result of being removed from their “emotional and labor ecosystems” (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016:3). Parents may develop ambivalence or hostility in response to their fear of losing their child as they assimilate into the college environment (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016). This assimilation process causes confusion and identity conflict for these students as they try to manage this state of limbo, switching between their identity at home and their identity in a White, upper-class environment at school (Wilbur and Rosigno 2016).

*Moving Forward*
Previous research suggests that college leadership enhances cultural and social capital and that it is important for labor market outcomes like hiring decisions and salaries (Congos and Stout 2003; Kuhn and Weinberger 2005; Dugan and Komives 2007; Stuber 2009; Hu 2011; Pappano 2015). Both perceived and real barriers are important factors in determining which students become leaders on campus: Non-White, low-income, and first-generation students are less likely than their counterparts both to perceive themselves as leaders and to take advantage of leadership opportunities and reap the attendant benefits (Swidler 1986; Aries and Seider 2005; Dugan and Komives 2007; Jack 2014; Lee 2015; Jack 2016). However, those who do become student leaders develop different approaches to leadership and tend to conceive of leadership as more community- and social justice-oriented than their White, upper-income peers (Harper and Quaye 2007; Reid 2013).

Nonetheless, there are nuances to consider: Each marginalized group has its own unique set of difficulties that produce different barriers to student leadership, but race, class, and first-generation status are heavily intertwined, so it is difficult to separate their individual influences on perceptions of leadership and leadership behaviors (Fischer 2007; Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). Moreover, different racial groups have different strategies for leadership engagement on campus; Black students are more driven by activism and are more likely to turn to cultural clubs for leadership opportunities (Fischer 2007; Harper and Quaye 2007; Reid 2013) while Hispanic students are least likely to use cultural clubs as an avenue for leadership, given that Latino student groups are perceived as stigmatized on campus (Fischer 2007). There are also racialized gender stereotypes that differentially shape students’ style of leadership and their self-perception and self-efficacy according to their race and gender (American Association of University Women 2016; Reid 2013; American Psychological Association 2009; Santovec
The present study seeks to examine the ways in which race, class, first-generation status, and the interaction of race and gender affect students’ perceptions of and actions within the leadership opportunity structure on F&M’s campus. Because the literature suggests that these groups of students are less likely than their peers to be student leaders and to perceive themselves as leaders, this study will explore whether non-White, low-income, and first-generation students at F&M are less likely than their peers to serve in leadership roles, to perceive themselves as student leaders, and to perceive that there are leadership opportunities available to them.

Previous research also suggests that race and gender interact to shape college students’ self-perceptions and leadership self-efficacy; this interaction will also be investigated here. In order to understand the perceived barriers to leadership for these underrepresented groups, the role of mentorship and minority-majority clubs in shaping these students’ perceptions and styles of leadership and engagement will also be examined.

METHODS

The present study is an extension of a previous research project conducted in the spring of 2015 titled “Diversity and Leadership: Racialized Perceptions of the Campus Leadership Opportunity Structure.” This study used a close-ended survey to analyze how race affects students’ level of comfort and confidence regarding obtaining leadership roles on campus. The present study includes data from the 2015 survey as well as a 2016 survey and in-depth interviews with students. Data was collected in three phases:

Phase 1: Demographics

The first data collection stage involved gathering information from F&M’s website about the demographic characteristics of the student body (http://www.fandm.edu/about/facts) and of student leaders. The directory of student organizations and their student leaders, last updated in
2017 (http://www.fandm.edu/campus-life/clubs), does not include full demographic information, so student leaders were categorized by race using last names, publicly available information on social media and personal knowledge of the researcher. This information should be interpreted with caution, given that this coding method presents certain difficulties. Visual representation on social media is not always an accurate indicator of race; in other words, people don’t always appear to be of the race or ethnicity with which they identify. Surnames can also be a useful indicator of race, but last names are tied to some races more than others: Surnames are more helpful for Hispanic and Asian students than others. Given the researcher’s personal knowledge of most of the students listed in the directory, the information in Tables 1 and 2 are assumed to be relatively accurate, but there is a margin of error.

Phase 2: Survey Data

The 2015 survey was designed and administered to a random sample selected by the registrar as part of a Sociological Methods course at F&M and contains a wide range of questions, many of which are not relevant to this study, as the survey was intended to provide data for various research projects conducted by individual students in the course. The relevant questions from the 2015 survey are included in Appendix A. There were 169 respondents: 41.4% were upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) and 53.2% were underclassmen (first-years and sophomores); 61.5% of the respondents were female, 36.7% were male, and 0.6% did not identify with either gender; 63.3% were White, 84.6% were domestic students, and 14.2% were low-income students. See Table 1 in Appendix C for a more detailed description of the survey sample.

In 2016, a similar close-ended online survey was distributed to a random sample of 400 F&M students selected by the registrar, making it impossible to use a stratified sampling method
to select a sample for the survey. A total of 111 students responded to the survey. There were relatively equal numbers of upperclassmen and underclassmen; 69.4% of the respondents were female, 27.9% were male, and 2.7% did not identify with either gender; 72% were White; and 91% were domestic students. More than half were of high socioeconomic status and about 20% were low-income students. 19% were first-generation students. See Table 1 in Appendix C for a more detailed description of the survey sample. For all variables for which comparable questions were asked in both the 2015 and 2016 surveys (see specific questions listed in Appendix A), the data from both surveys was combined. Both surveys were approved by F&M’s Human Subjects Committee prior to administration.

For both the 2015 and 2016 surveys, a disproportionate number of respondents were female; 48% of the student body is male, but only 27.9% of the 2016 survey respondents and 36.7% of the 2015 survey respondents are male. Similarly, domestic students are overrepresented in the 2016 sample: While 17.1% of the student body is international, only 9.1% of the survey respondents were international. In the 2015 survey sample, 15.4% of the respondents were international students, which is much closer to being representative of the student body. According to the information available on F&M’s website, 60.1% of students are White domestic students. There is no data on the racial/ethnic background of international students, so it is more difficult to determine how representative the samples for each survey are of the student body, but 63.3% of the 2015 survey respondents identified as White and 71.8% of the 2016 survey respondents identified as White. The 2015 sample seems to be more representative of the student body. See Table 1, Appendix C for a more detailed comparison of each survey sample and the student body.

*Phase 3: In-Depth Interviews*
Because students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students are small populations in the student body, they were present only in small numbers in the random sample for the survey. I used semi-structured, open-ended interviews with a purposive sample of 25 students, deliberately oversampling students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students, to gather qualitative data about student perceptions of the leadership opportunity structure as they are filtered through the lenses of race, gender, and socioeconomic status; this qualitative data will help explain patterns present in the survey data. These groups were oversampled because they are the population of interest in this study, which is focused on whether these minority groups perceive barriers to leadership involvement on campus.

Interview subjects were selected through a snowball sampling method. I aimed to include students of varied races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and genders as well as students who were leaders and those who were not. A diverse sample would offer better insight into the perceived barriers to leadership involvement as well as strategies for engaging in leadership across lines of race and class and how these might differ by gender within racial and class groups. Club leaders were contacted to find students who were willing to be interviewed. The students I interviewed then referred other students who might be willing to talk to me. Because the leaders I first contacted for interviews are highly involved students, their social circles tend to be composed of other highly involved students; consequently, engaged student leaders were overrepresented in my snowball sample of interviewees. However, through my own social network on campus, I purposefully reached out to a few students who are relatively uninvolved so they could speak to the reasons for disengagement and the barriers to campus involvement. The interviewees selected were not well-known by the interviewer. This was done to make students more comfortable in sharing their true opinions about all student clubs and organizations, regardless of
whether or not the interviewer is a part of those organizations; this is easier if the interviewees are not aware of the groups with which the interviewer is affiliated. The interview was approved by the Sociology Department’s Human Subjects Review Board.

Research Questions

- Are students of color, low-income student, and first-generation students less likely than their peers to be student leaders?
- Are students of color, low-income student, and first-generation students less likely than their peers to perceive an open student leadership opportunity structure on campus?
- Are students of color, low-income student, and first-generation students less likely than their peers to have positive self-perceptions regarding their leadership abilities?
- Do cultural clubs, minority-majority student organizations, and mentorship programs serve an important role in the engagement and leadership of racial minority, low-income, and first-generation students?

Independent Variables: asked in both the survey and interview.

- Race: For the purposes of this study, race is defined as a set of socially constructed categories based on skin color and identifiable physical features. It will be measured by respondents’ reported self-identification as either White or a racial minority category. Students of color are a heterogeneous group and have very different collegiate experiences, so while it would be ideal to separate non-White students into various racial groups, students of color are present only in small numbers in the survey sample. For any meaningful statistical analysis of this data, these students must be analyzed as one group. However, the interviews allow a window into the differences between them.
- Socioeconomic Status: For the purposes of this study, socioeconomic status is defined as
one’s social and economic position based on factors such as income and occupation. It will be measured by the highest level of education completed and the type of occupation held by respondents’ parent(s). In sociological research, socioeconomic status is usually measured using household income or some combination of parental income, education, and occupation. Students may not know their household income, so parental education and occupation were used for this study. Parental occupation is divided into the following categories: professional; administrative and managerial; and clerical, sales, production, and agriculture. Parental education is divided into the following categories: advanced degree, Bachelor’s degree, and no degree. Students who have at least one parent with an advanced degree who is working in a professional field are categorized as being of high socioeconomic status. Students who have at least one parent with a Bachelor’s degree who works in a managerial or administrative capacity are categorized as being of middle socioeconomic status. Students who have parents who did not obtain college degrees and who work in clerical, production, or agricultural fields are categorized as being of low socioeconomic status. There were few students who did not fall neatly into these categories; students whose parents do not have a degree but hold managerial or administrative jobs were classified as being of middle socioeconomic status due to the income associated with such occupations and students whose parents have a college degree but work in clerical, production, or agricultural fields were classified as being of low socioeconomic status for the same reason.

- **First-generation Status**: Students who did not have a parent who had completed a college degree are considered first-generation status. A description of how parental education was measured is included in the previous section (Socioeconomic Status).
Mentorship: Students were asked if they were involved in any of the following programs: Next Generation, Posse, Gray Scholars. These are well-established scholarship and mentorship programs that provide social and academic support to program participants.

Survey: Dependent Variables

- Student Leadership: Students were asked whether they had served on the executive board of a student organization, as captain of a sports team, or as a manager in an on-campus job. Executive board positions in student organizations were classified according to the positions listed on the F&M website directory of student organizations and their leaders; some student organizations only count their President and Vice President as executive board members while others include various other positions, such as public relations, alumni chair, secretary, and treasurer. All these positions were counted as leadership roles for the purposes of this study.

- Perceptions of Difficulty: This variable is an absolute measure of how students perceive the openness of the leadership opportunity structure. If students feel it is difficult to obtain leadership roles, they perceive a closed opportunity structure. Students were asked how easy or difficult they felt it was or would be for them to obtain a leadership role on campus. Responses were classified into three groups: easy, neutral, and difficult.

- Perceptions of Likelihood: This variable is a comparative measure of how students perceive the openness of the leadership opportunity structure. If students feel they are unlikely to obtain a leadership role on campus, they perceive a closed opportunity structure—or more specifically, an opportunity structure that is closed to them. Students were asked if they felt they were more likely, equally likely, or less likely than their peers to obtain a leadership role on campus.
• Perceptions of Accessibility: This variable is another comparative measure of how students perceive the openness of the leadership opportunity structure. If students feel that leadership roles are inaccessible to certain groups based on race, class, or gender, they perceive a closed opportunity structure—or more specifically, an opportunity structure that is closed to certain students based on biased selection processes. This variable measures students’ perception of whether the leadership opportunity structure is systematically unequal as opposed to their perception of their own chances of succeeding in the leadership opportunity structure, as measured by the likelihood variable. Students were asked if they felt leadership positions were more accessible, equally accessible, or less accessible to them than to their peers; they were also asked if they felt leadership positions were more accessible to certain students based on class, race, and gender.

• Preparation: This variable measures students’ perception of whether they have developed leadership skills through prior experiences; for instance, having held a leadership position in high school may make a student feel more prepared to be a leader in college. Students were asked to rate how prepared they felt to take on leadership roles when they arrived on campus. Responses were divided into three categories: prepared, neutral, and unprepared.

• Self-Efficacy: This variable is a measure of students’ confidence in their leadership abilities. Students were asked whether they would describe themselves as leaders. If students do consider themselves leaders, they are likely to be confident in their leadership abilities. If they do not, they less likely to be confident in their leadership abilities.

• Perceptions of Leadership Benefits: This variable measures students’ perception of whether it is useful to engage in leadership opportunities in college, as this perception is shaped by habitus; the literature shows students with a middle-class habitus are likely to
see college leadership opportunities in utilitarian ways while others may view it as a
distraction from academics. Students were asked if they felt that it was important to
engage in leadership opportunities in college. Those who indicated they had served in a
leadership capacity were also asked if they felt their leadership involvement was
beneficial in developing interpersonal skills, organizational and managerial skills,
confidence, and problem-solving skills.

See Appendix A for the full list of survey questions.

2015 Survey Data:

The 2015 survey uses race and socioeconomic status as independent variables and student
leadership, perceptions of difficulty, and perceptions of likelihood as dependent variables. The
survey also uses perceptions of accessibility as a dependent variable, but it is measured only in
terms of race. Students were asked if they felt leadership positions were more accessible, equally
accessible, or less accessible to White students than to racial minority students.

Interview:

Interviewees were asked similar questions to measure self-efficacy and perceptions of the
usefulness and accessibility of leadership opportunities on campus. Additionally, they were
asked about the prestige of leadership positions in different student organizations and whether
that influenced their perceptions of accessibility. The main focus of the interviews was how and
why students became involved in leadership roles in order to gain a better understanding of the
process through which students seek out and engage in leadership opportunities and whether
those processes are racialized and/or classed. See Appendix B for the interview protocol.

Analysis:

The results section will first discuss the data gathered in Phase 1 of the research process
to illustrate the current composition of student leaders at F&M, whether certain racial groups are over or underrepresented in campus leadership, and whether cultural clubs and minority-majority organizations offer significant leadership opportunities for racial minority students. This will be followed by an analysis of the survey responses. I will compare respondents’ feelings of self-efficacy and preparedness by race, class, and first-generation status to determine if these demographic groups differ in their self-perceptions. The role of mentoring relationships in mediating these factors will be assessed. The third portion of the results section will analyze students’ perceptions of how useful leadership roles are and whether they feel they have personally benefitted from being student leaders; this will allow for a consideration of the roles that race, class, and first-generation status play in forming students’ perceptions of the importance or unimportance of college leadership, as this can also affect whether students seek out leadership roles. The role of mentoring programs in mediating these perceptions will again be assessed. Finally, students’ perceptions of the openness of the leadership opportunity structure will be explored to determine if perceptions of openness differ among racial and class groups and between first-generation and non-first-generation students.

RESULTS

For all interview excerpts quoted in this study, names have been changed to protect the privacy of the interviewees. Only statistically significant (p < 0.05) findings are presented; discussion of trends within the sample that were not statistically significant is limited. Gender was not a statistically significant factor for any of the independent variables either on its own or when it was analyzed along with race. It is possible that the underrepresentation of men in both the 2015 and 2016 survey sample affected these results, but it is also possible that the overrepresentation of women in student leadership positions (see Table 2, Appendix C)
encourages more women on campus to see leadership opportunities as being available to them and to see themselves as potential leaders. Another possibility is that gender is less salient an identity for students than race, and therefore it does not produce a significant effect on their self-perceptions or perceptions of the opportunity structure. In any case, gender is not discussed in the survey results, but it is referred to in the interviews. Due to the small sample size for the 2015 and 2016 surveys, it is difficult to analyze the results intersectionally, but the interviews offer a more intersectional perspective.

Who Are the Student Leaders?

Table 2 in Appendix C shows the breakdown of student leaders by race as compared to the percentage of the student body that each racial group represents. This information was compiled for 471 student leaders who were listed on the F&M website club directory as an executive board member of at least one student organization. The same breakdown by race is also given for student organizations when minority-majority clubs are excluded from the calculations. According to Franklin & Marshall College’s list of recognized student organizations and their leaders, White, Asian, and Black students are overrepresented in student leadership. When clubs with a mostly non-white membership are excluded, Asian and White students remain overrepresented, Black students become underrepresented, and Hispanic students become much more underrepresented.

In Table 2a, Appendix C, the racial composition of leaders in each type of organization—Greek, minority-majority, or other mainstream groups—is listed. More than half of all Black student leaders and over 40% of Hispanic student leaders hold positions in minority-majority organizations compared to less than 1% of their White peers (p = .000). Over a quarter of White student leaders hold positions in Greek organizations compared to less than 10% and less than
20% of Black and Hispanic student leaders, respectively (p = .000). This suggests that minority-majority organizations play an important role for Black and Hispanic students’ leadership engagement in college. This may indicate that it is easier for them to attain such positions in these organizations or that they are either more comfortable attaining positions in these organizations or simply uncomfortable getting involved in mainstream organizations, as these two interview respondents noted:

“I think with race, you see a lot of the same races within those organizations, so it can be intimidating as a person of color when you walk into the room and no one looks like you. More importantly, no one looks like you, but they all look like each other.”
-Karina: Hispanic, Middle SES, First-Generation, Female, Underclass

“I chose the [cultural club] and [cultural club] because they reflected the community back home.”
-Frank: Asian, Low SES, First-Generation, Male, Underclass

The 2016 survey data showed that approximately 53% of the survey respondents indicated that they have held or are currently holding leadership positions on campus. See Table 3, Appendix C for the 2016 survey data. When this data is broken down by race, we find that White students are more likely to be student leaders (63%) than non-White students (34.5%) (p = .009). This relationship holds true when this data is combined with the 2015 survey data: 56.3% of White respondents were student leaders while 34.1% of non-White respondents were student leaders (p = .001). See Table 4, Appendix C for the combined survey data. Based on this data, racial minority students are less likely to be student leaders than their White counterparts. The likelihood of being a student leader was not significantly different across socioeconomic groups or between first-generation and non-first-generation students, although the first-generation students in this sample were less likely to be student leaders than their counterparts.

Leadership roles at F&M offer many opportunities to cultivate students’ interests and
skills as well as resume-building opportunities. It is an important component of the college experience and there is a specific demographic of F&M students who are not as likely to be reaping those benefits, especially within mainstream campus organizations, which often have the most resources and offer the greatest development of social and cultural capital for low-income and racial minority students who can form social ties across race and class lines in these groups more so than in cultural clubs. Given that, at least on paper, student leadership positions are equally open and available to all students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status, understanding students’ perceptions of the leadership opportunity structure may help to address the possible unequal distribution of these positions.

Self-Perception

This study is concerned not only with differences in representation among student leaders, but also with the factors that may influence whether students pursue leadership opportunities—one of which is self-perception. The only significant predictor of self-perception was race; there was no statistically significant relationship between class or first-generation status and self-perception (see Table 3, Appendix C for this data). Even for racial minority students, only the relationship between race and feelings of preparation was statistically significant: Nearly half of all respondents felt prepared to take on leadership roles when they arrived on campus, but this was true for only 28% of non-White students compared to almost 60% of White students (p = .023). The relationship between race and self-efficacy was not statistically significant, but the trends found within this sample show that non-White respondents were less likely to report high levels of self-efficacy than White students. The interview phase of this study provides more insight into how race affects self-perceptions.

Perceptions of the Leadership Opportunity Structure
Another factor which may influence whether students pursue leadership opportunities is perception of the opportunity structure. This has much to do with habitus, as perceptions of the openness of the leadership opportunity structure are reflective of students’ perceptions of what is possible for them; these perceptions are undoubtedly affected by real barriers to opportunity, but perceptions themselves also impact behavior. According to the literature, students with a middle-class habitus would be more likely to perceive an open opportunity structure because they would perceive more possibilities and less barriers for themselves while those who have not developed a middle-class habitus may have more negative perceptions of social structures.

The results of the 2016 survey indicate that over 96% of students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and first-generation status believe leadership opportunities on campus are more accessible to some students than others based on at least one of the following categories: race, class, or gender. About 40% of all students felt opportunities are more accessible to some students than others based on all three of those categories. This variable of accessibility was measured by three separate questions asking whether students felt leadership opportunities were fair or skewed by race, class, or gender; there were no statistically significant differences among class groups or between first-generation and non-first generation groups for this variable.

Race, on the other hand, was a significant factor: Over half of the White respondents felt that the leadership opportunity structure was less open to certain groups for all three categories—race, class, and gender—but only 13% of non-White students felt the same, although 78.3% of non-White students felt the structure was skewed by at least one of these factors (p = .003). Upon closer examination, this is due to non-White students’ perceptions of a lack of gender discrimination in the leadership opportunity structure. There were no statistically significant differences between White and non-White students in their perceptions of race and class bias in
the opportunity structure—both were more likely than not to say opportunities were skewed in favor of White and upper-class students—but non-White students were significantly more likely to believe that the opportunity structure was fair in terms of gender ($p = .000$). Almost 80% of White students felt the opportunity structure was skewed by gender while only 38.5% of non-White students felt the same (see Table 3, Appendix C). However, when the 2015 and 2016 survey data were combined, over half of non-White respondents believed the leadership opportunity structure was restricted by race compared to 21% of their White peers ($p = .000$) (see Table 4, Appendix C). The 2016 survey data also shows that 40% of non-White students felt that leadership opportunities were less accessible to them than their peers compared to 17% of their White peers ($p = .016$) (see Table 3, Appendix C). There were no statistically significant differences among class groups or between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. It seems that most students regardless of race, class, or first-generation status believe the opportunity structure is skewed, but there are racial differences in perceptions of whom the structure is skewed against.

Two other measures were used to determine students’ perceptions of the openness of the leadership opportunity structure: how easy or difficult it was to obtain a leadership position and how likely the respondent felt they were to obtain a leadership position. About 28% of all students felt that it was easy to obtain a leadership position and only 3% felt it was difficult. About a third of the respondents felt they were more likely than their peers to obtain a leadership position and 17% believed they were less likely to do so (see Table 3, Appendix C). According to the combined 2015 and 2016 data, 60% of respondents felt it was easy to obtain a leadership position and 12% felt it was difficult. 24% of respondents felt they were more likely than their peers to obtain a leadership position and 14% felt they were less likely to do so (see Table 4,
There were significant differences in perceptions of difficulty and likelihood of attaining leadership positions between White and non-White students, but not among class groups or between first-generation and non-first-generation students: In the 2016 survey data, 64% of White students felt it was easy to obtain a leadership role and none felt it was difficult while half of the non-White respondents felt it was easy and 30% felt it was difficult (p = .002). Over 40% of White students felt they were more likely to obtain leadership roles than their peers and 10% felt they were less likely to do so while less than 20% of non-White students felt they were more likely to obtain leadership roles than their peers and almost 40% felt they were less likely to do so (p = .003) (see Table 3, Appendix C). In the combined 2015 and 2016 data, only perceptions of likelihood were statistically significant: 26% of White students felt they were more likely to obtain leadership roles than their peers and 3% felt they were less likely to do so while 11% of non-White students felt they were more likely to obtain leadership roles than their peers and 31% felt they were less likely to do so (p = .000) (see Table 4, Appendix C).

Trends in the 2016 data show that first-generation students in our sample were more likely than their peers to say that attaining a leadership position is difficult and to say that they are less likely to attain a leadership position; both the 2016 data and the combined data show the same pattern for low-income students, although none of these relationships were statistically significant in either data set.

Students elaborated on their feelings about accessibility in the interview stage. One recurring theme was the ways in which leadership opportunities are publicized and the potential inequities that may result. One interviewee went so far as to indicate that the student leaders of each class year are determined soon after arriving on campus and that certain students are
assumed to be future leaders and cultivated as such, while others are not.

“Even as a freshman, I think you can see who’s eventually going to be president of that organization, or who’s going to take on a giant leadership role…It’s the people that are most well-known in those organizations. I think it’s very easy to tell who’s eventually going to be in leadership. I think in a lot of ways, we’re segregated by [race and socioeconomic status] in our clubs and organizations already, so it would seem that the people who dominate certain groups are going to be the people that get elected into certain leadership positions.”
-Mary: White, Low SES, First-Generation, Female, Upperclass

“I think a lot of [leadership opportunities] come from word of mouth. A lot of the positions that are available come from, like, ‘oh, this club is looking for this and this, you should do it.’”
-Celia: Hispanic, Low SES, First-Generation, Female, Upperclass

In the first quote, Mary is referring to the overrepresentation of White, upper-class students in most mainstream organizations. She feels that because they “dominate” these student groups, they are most likely to have social ties to the other White, upper-class students in their organizations and to be voted into leadership roles by those students. She describes the leadership opportunity structure as somewhat of a popularity contest: If you have more friends in a particular organization, you are more likely to become a leader in that organization, and she feels students are more likely to be friends with others who match their race and/or social class, creating a system of unequal opportunity when it comes to leadership. In the second quote, Celia is commenting on her perception that leadership positions are not equally accessible to all students because many are advertised by word of mouth; if, as Mary believes, students are more likely to be friends with others who match their race and social class, then leadership opportunities advertised by word of mouth are restricted to certain social group, as the students who dominate leadership roles on campus—White, upper-class students—advertise opportunities only to their own social circles. The lack of racial and class integration on campus, particularly within student friend groups, leads to inequalities in the leadership opportunity structure.
White, middle and upper-class students were sometimes frustrated with the leadership opportunity structure as well, but their frustrations were mainly due to whether the position they wanted was elected or appointed and how prestigious the organization in which they were pursuing a role was, as the difficulty of attaining a leadership position was perceived as increasing with the prestige of the organization. These frustrations were often mediated by membership in Greek life, which the literature suggests is an important avenue for leadership: White students are overrepresented in Greek life leadership and Greek organizations are much more likely than other student groups to have more than 7 leadership positions available (p = .000) (see Table 2a, Appendix C). The average number of leadership positions available in each student organization was 4.81. Minority-majority organizations had a slightly higher average with 5.85 positions available per group, but the number of positions available in Greek organizations was much higher at 8.25. Thus, White students have more access to organizations with the greatest amount of leadership opportunities, and more opportunities means it is easier to attain a position, as this respondent explains:

“[The degree of difficulty of getting involved] depends on the type of organization and the organizational structure. For example, holding an appointed leadership position in a sorority is more attainable. Election to the sorority executive board is more difficult to attain. If there's more opportunity to be involved, I had an easier time.”

-Lynn: White, Middle SES, Female, Underclass

It seems that race is the most salient factor in shaping students’ perceptions of the openness of the opportunity structure. While students of all races and classes are likely to say that the leadership opportunity structure is skewed, non-White students are more likely to say the opportunity structure is skewed specifically by race rather than class or gender and more likely to feel that leadership positions are difficult to attain, less accessible to them than to their peers, and that they are less likely than their peers to attain leadership positions. Students elaborated in their
interviews that the social segregation of students by race and class on campus is a major factor in reproducing the inequalities in the leadership opportunity structure.

Perceptions of the Benefits of College Leadership

Perceptions of whether leadership positions are beneficial are also related to habitus, as they reflect what students feel is possible for or relevant to them. Students overwhelmingly believe that collegiate leadership roles provide an opportunity for skill development that is useful later in life. The vast majority of respondents (83.8%) believe college leadership is a useful experience and 96.3% of student leaders feel they received some personal benefit in regard to skill-building or confidence-building by serving in leadership roles (see Table 3, Appendix C). There are no statistically significant differences among racial or class groups or between first-generation and non-first-generation students. Interviewees unanimously point out that these leadership opportunities are—at least from their perspective—how the world sees you before you actually enter the workforce.

“I guess it looks nice on a resume, polishes it up. And you get the experience of being in a leadership position and managing a club. It’s experience for the real world, how to deal with people who are working with you… I just felt like it was something I had to do, you know, get involved. It’s just what you’re told to do.”
-Frank: Asian, Low SES, First-Generation, Male, Underclass

“I’d say when you’re applying for things, it helps, even in college, like applying for another internship next year, it would be nice that that internship program knows that you held leadership positions previously. It helps if you’re going on to the workplace, it’s nice to see if you were, like, president or something of a club.”
-Abel: Asian, Low SES, First-Generation, Male, Underclass

However, when the relationship between demographic factors (race, socioeconomic status, and first-generation status) and perceptions of usefulness is broken down by membership in mentoring programs, some statistically significant differences emerge. Three quarters of low-income students who are not in mentoring programs believe leadership experience is useful
while all their counterparts in mentoring programs say the same (p = .012). Similarly, 72.7% of first-generation students who are not in mentoring programs believe college leadership is useful while all of their counterparts in mentoring programs say the same (p = .025). Perceptions of usefulness did not vary by race. Mentoring programs seem to be an important factor in changing low-income and first-generation students’ perspective on how leadership roles can benefit them later in life.

Does Mentoring Matter?

As the relationship between class and first-generation status, perceptions of the usefulness of leadership roles, and involvement in mentoring programs shows, it is important to consider the overrepresentation of racial minority, low-income, and first generation students in mentoring programs. Roughly 91% of the survey respondents are not or have never been enrolled in any kind of mentoring program—Posse, KIPP to College, Gray Scholars, Next Generation, or F&M College Prep. When the respondent pool is broken down by race, socioeconomic status, and first-generation status, as expected, all of these factors are correlated with being enrolled in a mentoring program (see Table 5, Appendix C). None of the White students in the sample are part of a mentoring program while 30% of the non-White students are (p = .000); almost 29% of the low-income students in this sample are part of a mentoring program, none of the middle-class students are, and less than 3% of the upper-class students are (p = .001); and 30% of the first-generation students in the sample are part of a mentoring program while less than 4% of non-first-generation students are (p = .000).

The effects of membership in a mentoring program were only statistically significant for race. Non-White students in mentoring programs are more likely (55.6%) than their non-White peers who do not participate in such programs (30%) to take on leadership roles on campus (p =
.009) (see Table 5, Appendix C). They are also more likely than their counterparts to feel prepared to take on leadership roles (62.5% compared to 11.8%) and more likely to report higher levels of self-efficacy (87.5% compared to 57.9%) (p = .002 and p = .048, respectively). Non-White student in mentoring programs were more likely (43%) than their counterparts (0%) to believe the leadership opportunity structure was skewed by class and gender as well as race; 87.5% of their counterparts believed it was skewed only by race (p = .000).

Although these results were not statistically significant, the trends in the 2016 data show that low-income students in mentoring programs reported higher levels of self-efficacy (83.3%) than their counterparts who are not in mentoring programs (70%) and that first-generation students in mentoring programs are more likely (50%) than their first-generation peers who are not in mentoring programs (35.7%) to be student leaders in this sample. This may be due to the focus of some mentoring programs, like Next Generation, on encouraging the leadership and engagement of first-generation students. A larger sample size with more low-income and first-generation students would be needed to understand the effects of mentoring programs on this population.

The interviews inform these conclusions about the merits of mentoring programs; they were characterized by all interviewees who participate in such programs as a motivating factor in campus involvement:

“I want to feel like I’m part of this campus, like I have a mark here. Like, me being a part of [mentoring program], it’s great because you know so many cool people, but when you know so many cool people, you also know what they’re doing and like, everyone is a part of something really cool on campus, or they’re making something that’s their own and I feel like I didn’t do that last semester… when you’re around leaders 24/7, you feel like maybe you should step it up.

-Karina: Hispanic, Middle SES, First-Generation, Female, Underclass

“[Mentoring program] allowed me to enter an unknown terrain with a sense of
purpose that I had never thought possible. Having a support group that constantly made an effort to remind me that I had potential allowed me to aspire to be something more. I decided to step outside of myself and used my [program] support as a way to become more involved than I had ever before in high school.”
-Mark: Black, Low SES, First-Generation, Male, Underclass

“[Mentoring program] allowed me to realize that not only do I have the ability to positively influence others near me, but if I put in the effort I may also impact the greater community and society around me. [Mentoring program] encouraged me with its extensive network and support system!”
-Mariana: Hispanic, Low SES, First-Generation, Female, Underclass

These feelings of support and encouragement that stem from being involved in mentoring programs are especially important considering that all interviewees described F&M’s campus social climate as highly competitive. Low-income, non-White, and first-generation students tended to describe competition for leadership positions on campus as overwhelming or discouraging while middle- and upper-class, White, and non-first-generation students tended to describe competition as a motivator. The difference in their level of confidence was striking, as illustrated by the two quotes below.

Student: “I kind of wanted to apply [for an executive board position in a student organization], but then I kind of psyched myself out. I feel like there’s more qualified applicants… I just psych myself out, like, “oh my god, everyone else is going to apply.”
Interviewer: “And you don’t think you’re a competitive applicant?”
Student: “No.”
-Celia: Hispanic, Low SES, First-Generation, Female, Upperclass

“I was running against this girl who didn’t really do anything and I felt that, you know, I had worked really hard and I thought I could do a lot for the club, so I ran for it and beat her and it was great. It was a positive motivator for me because I am a competitive person and I like to win.”
-Carmen: Mixed Race (White/Hispanic), High SES, Female, Underclass

If mentoring programs can positively impact students’ self-efficacy and feelings of preparedness for leadership roles, these programs can serve an important function in mediating the feelings of inadequacy that result from perceived competition for leadership roles on campus. However,
mentoring programs were found to have a significant impact only on students of color, not low-income or first-generation students.

Interview Profiles

There were several different approaches to campus leadership that emerged among interviewees, and five of these interviewees exemplify the general attitudes expressed in the interviews regarding the effects of race, class, and first-generation status. It is important to note, however, that all of the non-White interviewees, with the exception of an upper-class, mixed-race woman, were low-income and almost all were first-generation. This highlights the intersectionality of these identities and how in practice, as Gillespie found, it is hard to separate these identities (2014). Indeed, it is the intersection of all these identities that informs students’ perceptions of themselves and the leadership opportunity structure.

The first two profiles, Daniel and Aaron, are both Black, low-income, first-generation students, but one has had exposure to a mentoring program and one has not. They each take a distinct approach to involvement on campus, mainly influenced by race. These approaches—either involving oneself in mainstream organizations to represent racial minority students in these venues or involving oneself exclusively in cultural clubs so as to focus on issues specific to the racial minority student population—are documented in the literature as common strategies for navigating campus life, and they showcase the tendency for Black students to adopt a social justice activist approach to campus involvement (Harper and Quaye 2007). All the Black men I spoke to described one of these two strategies. The fact that Daniel is involved in a mentoring program may speak to the influence of such programs on non-White students’ confidence and level of comfort in entering predominantly White mainstream organizations. Both Daniel and Aaron’s experiences speak to the importance of cultural clubs and minority-majority
organizations and focus on the importance of using leadership positions for activism on campus; only one Black woman was interviewed and her attitudes towards minority-majority organizations and leadership as activism were very similar to Daniel and Aaron’s.

The third profile, Mariana, represents the individualist rhetoric that has been documented in the literature among Hispanic women leaders. Mentoring programs may also foster these individualistic perceptions: Once racial minority, low-income, and first-generation students understand the benefits of leadership and campus involvement, they are encouraged to engage in student leadership so that they can get ahead and give themselves the best advantage possible when moving into the workplace. Social justice, for these students, is a long-term goal. After they use leadership opportunities for personal development and skill-building that makes them better candidates for high-paying, high-status jobs, they can use their position in the workforce to make social change. This was the most common attitude among non-White students of a race other than Black. Mariana also exemplifies the conflicts many Hispanic students face when deciding whether or not to join Latino organizations on campus that may have negative reputations among the general student body (Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth 2015). The one Hispanic man interviewed also did not feel his race was a salient identity in regard to leadership, but he did feel discouraged by lack of experience and also shied away from Latino groups for the same reason as Mariana.

The fourth profile, Carl, represents one of two common responses of White, middle- and upper-class students. Students like Carl prioritize social integration and networking on campus. They acknowledge the skill-building and resume-building benefits of leadership opportunities, but those opportunities are secondary; in other words, they follow from networking, which opens the door to such opportunities. These students seek out social ties through student organization
soon after arriving on campus. The last profile, Ann, is that of a high-achieving White, middle-
class female, who represents the second common attitude of White students at F&M. She
recognizes the importance of networking and skill- and resume-building, like Carl in the third
profile, but she also takes on a distinctly activist attitude. Although this is not as common as
Carl’s attitude, it is still a major theme among White, middle- and upper-class students. This
profile also represents the beliefs some students hold about leadership as an innate quality; Ann
has been told throughout her life that she is a strong leader, so she believes she was born to be a
leader and has personality traits that support that belief. Both Carl and Ann see college
leadership and involvement as a natural next step and they see these opportunities in a utilitarian
sense, which are the hallmarks of a middle-class habitus. The non-White students in the
interview sample, like Daniel, Aaron, and Mariana did not see leadership opportunities the same
way; rather, Daniel and Aaron saw these opportunities as avenues for activism and Mariana saw
them as an opportunity for personal development and reinventing her identity—an attitude
heavily influenced by her mentoring program.

Daniel

Daniel is a Black, low-income, first-generation upperclass student leader who is involved
in a mentoring program. He is highly motivated and has had a clear vision of his goals for
college and beyond since he arrived on campus. The first thing he did was get involved in
student government. “It was easy for me to get involved on campus,” he said, “because I knew
what I wanted to be part of…and took advantage of the first opportunity that came my way.” He
immediately ran for a position. His charisma and dedication to the job led to a very successful
campaign; he was elected for his chosen position and continued to be involved in student
government throughout his time on campus. He chose this mainstream involvement “because
campus issues mattered to [him].” He wanted to work towards social change, and he thought the best way to do that was to “make sure [he] was at the table when important discussions were being had.”

Despite his success, however, he began to feel that something was missing. He began to feel the pressures of being a racial minority student in a mainstream organization, not to mention being a racial minority student leading a mainstream organization. At first, he felt that immersing himself deeper into the student leader role would help him feel more integrated. “Once I got involved, I got caught up in the circle and cycle of involvement—once you’re in it, it’s hard to get out,” he told me. As it turns out, the solution was not “getting out,” but getting involved in specific organizations that could fulfill the emotional and social support Daniel was missing. “I joined a few cultural clubs on campus for two reasons: First, they created a place of belonging for people like me, and second, I had the opportunity to learn from different cultures in a way that allowed me to value other people’s cultures and appreciate my own.”

Daniel’s attitudes echo those of the Black men in Harper and Quaye’s study, who focused on two main benefits of college leadership involvement: they leaned on cultural clubs and minority-majority organizations for social and academic support (Fischer 2007; Reid 2013) and they prioritized learning cross-cultural communication skills and developing social ties across racial lines within cultural and mainstream organizations because these skills and ties would come in handy when they entered the workforce (Harper and Quaye 2007). In mainstream organizations, Harper and Quaye’s interviewees felt responsible for representing racial minority students and advocating for the interests of marginalized communities (2007). Daniel expresses all of these sentiments in his interview, as he used cultural clubs for support and developing cross-cultural communication skills and he used mainstream organizations to further his activism
on campus. Being a member of both cultural and mainstream organizations was crucial to his
development as a leader because it shaped his own racial identity and enhanced his ability to
understand, communicate, and work with people of other backgrounds.

Aaron

Aaron is a Black, low-income, first-generation upperclass student like Daniel, but he is
not involved in a mentoring program. Much of his rhetoric regarding student leaders was similar
to Daniel’s: He felt compelled to be a student leader because he “understand[s] the need for
diversity in student leadership” and saw that “many of our most important student-led
organizations aren’t led by students of color, nor [do they] have students of color on their
executive boards.” Aaron sees F&M as a place that is becoming more diverse and believes
campus initiatives to increase diversity have been successful, but they need to go further. Simply
bringing diverse students to campus is not enough on its own. “To continue its progress, I believe
that the college should focus on transforming every aspect of itself to fit that initiative,” he says.
Aaron cites student organizations as the best place to start working towards integrating diverse
students from all backgrounds into campus life.

He felt it was relatively easy to join clubs when he arrived on campus. He was able to try
sports and intended to “try new things and find meaningful connections that [he] would keep
over the next couple of years,” but there were several barriers to campus involvement for Aaron.
He has been working two jobs simultaneously to cover his costs on campus, so it is difficult to
find time for extracurricular activities. During his first two years, he was much more involved in
student groups; as graduation approaches, he is taking on more work hours to cover upcoming
costs. At the time of our interview, Aaron was taking five courses instead of the usual four-
course workload to make up for past unsatisfactory grades so he can graduate on time. Although
he has appreciated these difficulties as a chance to learn time management skills, it has limited his involvement in student groups.

Aaron chose to involve himself exclusively in cultural clubs and did not want to take on leadership in a mainstream organization. He avoided mainstream organizations because he felt a sense of discomfort in a primarily White environment. He believed he understood the implications of coming to a predominantly White institution before he arrived on campus: “Unlike where I come from, people of color are the minorities here. I knew that this would be something that would make me feel uncomfortable in a sense, because I’ve never been surrounded by White people.” He felt that by joining two cultural clubs where he was in the racial majority, he could balance “this feeling of being overwhelmed” on campus. These clubs acted as “safe havens and counter spaces for the students of color on campus.”

Aaron was not a member of a scholarship or mentoring program on campus; his financial constraints limited his ability to engage in campus life and the lack of mentoring support may have contributed to his desire to remain within a familiar community, as he did not have access to a program that could have improved his self-perception and encouraged him to learn cross-context (Truong, McMickens, and Brown 2015). As a result, he chose to involve himself only in clubs where he felt his cultural background would be understood and appreciated rather than endure the discomfort of a predominantly White mainstream organization that could have developed “bridging social capital,” which is most valuable for low-income students (Bourdieu 1986; Fischer 2007; Harper and Quaye 2007; Reid 2013).

Carl

As a White, high-income, upperclass student, Carl’s focus when he came to campus was social life. His goal was to be integrated on campus, “to meet people and make connections.” He
joined two sports teams, two academic clubs, and an activist organization because he felt that being involved in an array of student groups would help him develop important communication and networking skills. He also sees them as resume-building opportunities. When asked about his motivations for joining these particular clubs, he said he joined sports that were not official school teams, but that would still make him seem athletic. He joined an activist organization because he “believe[s] in its cause, and still do[es] even though [he] no longer attend[s] meetings,” and he joined two academic clubs to gain additional experience in his chosen field outside of the classroom, as this would be an advantage when he decided to apply for internships or jobs that require specific skills.

His primary focus, though, is on his Greek organization. He joined Greek life because he perceived the Greek system to be central to the campus social climate. He also knew he wanted to join because he “was interested in the secrecy and intrigue, and didn't really mind the exclusivity of it.” He believed that Greek life would provide him with a social network and a support system, “a group that [he] could instantly connect with,” whether that meant building real friendships or just acquaintances he could say hello to on campus. This means Carl was focused on developing “bonding social capital,” which is a set of social ties that links a support network of people who are similar to oneself; in this case, Carl was interested in developing “bonding social capital” with other White, middle- and upper-class men (Bourdieu 1986).

Carl did not intend to take on leadership roles, but when his fraternity brothers elected him to a position on the executive board of the fraternity, he had no doubts about accepting. He felt supported by his brothers, believing that their faith in his ability to succeed in his elected position must be evidence of his actual abilities, despite his lack of experience in student leadership. Even though Carl did not originally want to be a student leader and his leadership
was incidental, he was confident in his leadership abilities and felt the role came naturally to him. This is evidence of his middle-class habitus: Carl sees his leadership abilities as natural or innate, so he is confident in his abilities despite lack of experience, indicating that he has developed what Lareau calls a “sense of entitlement” rather than the “sense of constraint” that lower-class students develop (2003). He feels comfortable advocating for himself and acting within existing social structures because he feels entitled to be there and he enjoys the social support and sense of belonging that comes from an organization of high social status on campus.

Mariana

Mariana is a Hispanic, low-income, underclass student who came to F&M through a mentoring program. She is an extremely involved student leader and she credits much of her confidence to her mentoring program. She felt it was easy to get involved because student clubs and organizations reached out to students through events like the student activities fair and through email and social media. Her mentoring program provided her with a network of upperclass students who could provide information about student organizations and student life. Before she even arrived on campus, student groups were sending emails about opportunities for involvement; she responded to an email about student government and now holds a prestigious leadership position. Through her network of upperclass students within her mentoring program, she learned of two minority-majority organizations and joined, eventually becoming the president of one of them.

She stressed the importance of the fact that the organizations she joined were not cultural clubs—they were just clubs in which racial minority students comprised the majority of the membership. She did not want to officially join any cultural clubs on campus. She acknowledged that she had attended meetings for two cultural clubs and that she felt they were comfortable
spaces for her to express herself, to find and connect with other students from similar backgrounds, and to feel at home. However, these were “not necessarily clubs that [she] wanted to be officially connected to.” She continues to “stop by their meetings unofficially” to stay socially connected to the members of those groups, but she felt the reputation associated with those groups would prevent her from taking on leadership roles in high-status mainstream organizations for which she would need to be elected by a White-majority membership. This echoes the sentiments that Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth found in their interviews with Hispanic students, many of whom shied away from Latino groups for fear of being associated with their negative reputation (2015).

Mariana’s main focus is on women’s empowerment on campus. She is a student leader in a women’s organization and describes her motivation for becoming a leader in this group as a way to promote “college success, self-empowerment, and community.” Women’s leadership is something she has always thought to be important, but she did not have many opportunities in high school to engage in student leadership. She joined several sports and enjoyed being involved with her school community, but lack of funding for after-school organizations limited what students could do. In college, she wanted to make up for lost time by engaging in something she was passionate about. The main factors that enabled her to do that were the financial aid that she received through her mentoring program and the ideals of leadership that her program instilled in her. “[Mentoring program] polished my idea of what a student leader was and what they could do,” leading her to feel empowered and to act on her “desire to help those around [her] and to just interact with people.” Her leadership on campus was driven largely by her belief in the importance of personal development. Although she does believe community activism is an important part of being a student leader, it is the empowerment and self-
development that comes first, which will enable her to enact change later in the workforce. This sentiment matched what the American Association of University Women found in their 2016 study of Hispanic women, who felt a need to distance themselves from their culture and adopt an individualistic perspective in order to be taken seriously as leaders.

Ann

Having taken a gap year between high school and college, Ann is older than her classmates and feels more mature and prepared for campus leadership. She is a White, middle-income, underclass student and she is passionate about activism. She is interested in environmental science and got involved in related clubs as soon as she arrived on campus. She described the process of getting involved as “super, super, super easy,” and her involvement allowed her to quickly develop a social network that she came to rely on for friendship as well as information, making her transition to college a smooth and pleasant one.

Ann currently holds a leadership position in an activist student organization that she heard about from a friend in her social network. She was personally recruited for that position, which was appointed rather than elected, which shows how her social capital on campus has benefitted her. Ann is also heavily involved in other mainstream organizations and student committees through which she plans major student events on campus and influences school policy. Still, Ann had too many goals and interests to settle for just a few leadership roles; she became a regular member for two other activist organizations, but “couldn’t commit to anything beyond membership” due to all the activities she was already involved in.

Ann’s perception of her leadership abilities is rooted in the idea that leadership is an innate quality. In this sense, her attitudes are very similar to Carl’s because she feels her leadership abilities come naturally, regardless of experience. “I feel compelled to be a student
leader because as a young person and a college student, I have a certain personality primed for activism,” she said. She feels that her individualism and self-confidence makes her a successful leader, but she also knows how to work well with others because she has a knack for identifying others’ strengths and creating plans of action that play to those strengths. Ann believes these are crucial skills to have, especially later in life when she will need to enter the workforce, where she will continue her activism. Having this personality and experience as a leader, she feels a responsibility for “resist[ing] and fight[ing] for change as an activist because…[she] owe[s] [her] service to the world.” This is evidence of her middle-class habitus; Ann feels that campus involvement is not only a natural next step for her, but also a requirement for skill-development and resume-building. In her eyes, each new club is another opportunity to develop valuable cultural and social capital. She is comfortable within social structures and feels entitled to engage with these structures (Lareau 2003).

DISCUSSION

The one factor consistently found to be a statistically significant predictor of leadership, self-perceptions, and perceptions of the opportunity structure was race. Low-income and first-generation students were not less likely than their peers to be student leaders, to have positive self-perceptions, to perceive an open opportunity structure, or to believe college leadership is useful. These students are present in small numbers in the survey samples and it is possible that they are underrepresented, although information about the percentage of the student body that is first-generation or low-income is not publicly available. It is possible that F&M’s revised financial aid policies as of 2008 have attracted low-income and first-generation students through programs like the Gray Scholars and Posse, students from charters like KIPP that provide support systems throughout students’ college experience, and F&M programs like College Prep
which encourage leadership prior to or early in the collegiate experience. This may mask any negative effects of class and first-generation status on self-perceptions and perceptions of the opportunity structure. However, it also possible that class and first-generation status are not salient identities or do not have a significant impact on student perceptions; this may be due to the fact that class and first-generation status are not visible identities and therefore would not impact students’ beliefs about how others perceive them. For instance, a low-income student running for an elected position in a student organization may not feel disadvantaged by their class status because it is unlikely that the voting members are aware of this status and therefore the individual cannot be stigmatized for being low-income.

Race, by contrast, is visible and does affect students’ beliefs about how others perceive them. Non-White students were less likely than their White peers to be student leaders, to perceive an open leadership opportunity structure, and to have positive self-perceptions regarding their leadership abilities. Non-White students were less likely than their White peers to feel prepared to be leaders and more likely to believe that attaining leadership positions is difficult, that they are less likely to become student leaders, and that leadership opportunities were less accessible to them than their peers. One particularly interesting finding was that non-White students were far more likely to believe that the leadership opportunity structure was skewed only by race as opposed to class and gender and they were much more likely to believe that the structure was fair in terms of gender. White students were more likely to believe the structure was skewed by all three factors and to believe the structure was skewed by gender. Non-White students did not differ from White students in their belief that college leadership was an important way to make social connections and develop skills that will be useful in the workplace. Gender did not affect non-White students’ leadership, self-perceptions, or
perceptions of the opportunity structure, nor was gender a statistically significant factor on its own. The fact that the interaction of race and gender was not significant may be a product of the small sample size, as Mariana reflects a distinctly gendered approach to leadership as a Hispanic woman in her interview. The significance of gender is also dependent on the salience of that identity; a non-White female student may arrive on campus and see plenty of women in leadership roles and believe that she, too, has opportunities to be a student leader, or she may see a lack of non-White leaders on campus and consequently believe that she has less opportunities for leadership. The salience of each identity affects students’ perceptions of the opportunity structure.

The findings suggest that minority-majority organizations are an important factor in encouraging non-White students’ leadership. Black students are overrepresented in minority-majority organization leadership, but both Hispanic and Black students are underrepresented in mainstream organizations. The interviewees explain that this has a lot to do with the discomfort of being a non-White student in a predominantly White organization as well as the lack of social integration on campus. All the non-White interviewees believed students were more likely to be friends with others of their own race and class, so if opportunities in mainstream organizations were being publicized by word of mouth, the social network non-White students had would not be helpful.

All students overwhelmingly believe that collegiate leadership roles provide an opportunity for skill development that is useful later in life, although the interviews indicated that White, middle- and upper-class students focused on resume-building and skill-building benefits while non-White students focused on personal development and activism. However, involvement in mentoring programs did have a significant impact on student perceptions of the benefits of
leadership in college: Three quarters of low-income students who are not in mentoring programs believe leadership experience is useful while all their counterparts in mentoring programs say the same and less than three quarters of first-generation students who are not in mentoring programs believe college leadership is useful while all of their counterparts in mentoring programs say the same. Mentoring did not affect non-White students’ perceptions of leadership benefits.

All other effects of membership in a mentoring program were statistically significant only for race and not for class or first-generation status. Non-White students in mentoring programs are more likely to take on leadership roles on campus, to feel prepared to take on leadership roles, to report higher levels of self-efficacy, and to believe the leadership opportunity structure is skewed by class and gender as well as race compared to their non-White peers who are not in mentoring programs. Nonetheless, mentoring programs were characterized by all interviewees who participate in such programs as a motivating factor in campus involvement because they improved self-perception and provided a social network. The support they received from these programs encouraged low-income, non-White, and first-generation students to engage in the competitive atmosphere on campus. While competition was motivating for White, upper-class students, non-White, low-income, and first-generation students who were not in mentoring programs felt that the competition on campus was discouraging.

These results are in line with what previous research has shown: Middle- and upper-class students tend to develop a sense of entitlement to campus resources and institutional support while low-income students develop a sense of constraint, not feeling comfortable taking advantage of resources or requesting support (Lareau 2003). Because race and class are so intertwined and because first-generation status is linked to social class, White, middle- and upper-class, non-first-generation students are much more likely to arrive on campus having
inherited valuable cultural capital from their parents. The findings detailed in this study reinforce what Anthony Jack concluded about the transmission of cultural capital: Students who come from racial minority, low-income areas and who are often first-generation students, can ‘catch up’ to their peers if they are immersed in an environment that reinforces valuable cultural capital, such as an elite private school. In this case, mentoring programs on campus serve that role, educating students about the benefits of leadership and involvement as well as cultivating their self-efficacy by building supportive social networks and useful ties with faculty. Mentoring programs also have the potential to alter habitus, especially for students of color; for example, Daniel, who was part of a mentoring program, felt confident and comfortable running for leadership positions in mainstream organizations while Aaron, who is not part of a mentoring program, felt uncomfortable doing so. Daniel had a middle-class habitus, which led him to believe that it was possible for him to lead mainstream organizations and that he was entitled to engage with those organizations.

The results of this study reflect the literature on specific racial groups, as well. The pattern shown here reinforces what Harper and Quaye (2007) and Reid (2013) found in relation to Black student involvement. Black students are more likely than any other racial minority group to get involved on campus and to be motivated by social justice activism to engage in leadership roles. The supportive social role of cultural clubs was also evident here for both Black and Hispanic students, as well as in Harper and Quaye’s (2007) and Nenga, Alvarado, and Blyth’s (2015) studies—although the hesitation among Hispanic students to align themselves with such groups is also documented both here and in the literature.

It is clear from this study and the body of work preceding it that cultural capital, which leads to the kind of skill-building, social integration, and useful networking, or social capital, that
students need in order to succeed on campus and beyond is reproduced along lines of race and class. Some students arrive on campus primed to take advantage of existing opportunities and others don’t, but mentoring programs can serve an important role in supporting those students who arrive unprepared. However, this study is not representative of all college campuses and did not have a large enough sample to analyze racial groups separately. Future work should oversample racial minority, low-income, and first-generation students to better examine these relationships and should focus on multiple campuses. Larger sample sizes will allow for a more intersectional analysis of the factors affecting leadership involvement.

Still, the information provided here can be used by college administrators to better understand the challenges that racial minority, low-income, and first-generation students face on campus and to better plan and support programs that encourage these students to take advantage of leadership opportunities. By increasing the proportion of racial minorities in leadership positions on campus, the institution would be better preparing student leaders for a multicultural workforce and increasing the intellectual development and positive self-perception of students of all marginalized identities. Programs such as F&M College Prep should be expanded to encourage identity-based, multicultural leadership among students in underserved areas because it is important to focus on how students’ experiences can be channeled into effective leadership. Their experiences should not be seen as a disadvantage in comparison to the experiences of their more privileged peers, but rather as an asset. Need-based programs such as the Gray Scholarship should include a mentoring component that runs through all four years of college. This, as suggested by the data and previous research, may help students of marginalized identities develop confidence in their leadership abilities. The campus should involve current student leaders, faculty members, and administrators in the process of improving existing programs and
should develop a larger network of mentors and faculty advisors that will allow the kind of encouragement and support available in current mentoring programs to be accessible to more students. College administrators and current student leaders should work together to develop organization membership and leadership recruitment processes that encourage delegation of tasks and a leadership role transition period that allows students formerly in positions of leadership to guide and support incoming student leaders. These measures can help create a more balanced and diverse student leadership and will, over time, create a more open opportunity structure. All students, regardless of demographic factors, can and should be able to access the full extracurricular benefits of F&M’s campus and the campus and student body will benefit from that increased diversity.
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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

2015 SURVEY: Only the survey questions relevant to this study are listed here.

1. What gender do you identify with?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Neither

2. Are you a US citizen?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. What racial/ethnic background do you identify with?
   a. East or South Asian, Pacific Islander
   b. Black (Non-Hispanic)
   c. White (Non-Hispanic)
   d. Hispanic/Latino/a
   e. Native American
   f. Multiracial
   g. Other

4. What is parent 1’s highest level of education?
   a. Did not complete high school
   b. High school or GED
   c. Some college
   d. Bachelor’s degree
   e. Master’s degree
   f. PhD or some advanced graduate degree
   g. Don’t know

5. What is parent 2’s highest level of education?
   a. Did not complete high school
   b. High school or GED
   c. Some college
   d. Bachelor’s degree
   e. Master’s degree
   f. PhD or some advanced graduate degree
   g. Don’t know

6. What is your current class year?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior

7. Are you currently serving in a leadership position (such as Executive Board member of a student organization or captain of a sports team) or have you ever held a leadership position on campus? How many?
   a. None
   b. One
   c. Two
d. Three 
  e. Four or more 

8. How easy or difficult was it for you to get involved in a leadership position? If you do not hold or have never held a leadership position on campus, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to get involved in a leadership position if you chose to pursue one? 
  a. Finding a leadership position is/would be very easy. 
  b. Finding a leadership position is/would be somewhat easy. 
  c. Finding a leadership position is not/would not be easy, but not difficult either. 
  d. Finding a leadership position is/would be somewhat difficult. 
  e. Finding a leadership position is/would be very difficult. 
  f. I don’t care about leadership positions. 

9. Think about the student leaders on campus. Select the response that most closely resembles your opinion. 
  a. I am more likely than my peers to attain a leadership position. 
  b. I am equally likely as my peers to attain a leadership position. 
  c. I am less likely than my peers to attain a leadership position. 
  d. I am much less likely than my peers to attain a leadership position. 
  e. Leadership positions are not accessible to me. 

10. Do you think leadership opportunities on campus are…? 
  a. Available to only non-White students 
  b. More available to non-White students than White students 
  c. Available to all students equally 
  d. More available to White students than non-White students 
  e. Available only to White students 

2016 SURVEY 

Section 1: Background Information 
  1. What gender do you identify with? 
     a. Female 
     b. Male 
     c. Other 
  2. What racial/ethnic background do you identify with? 
     a. (East or South) Asian, Pacific Islander 
     b. Middle Eastern 
     c. Black (Non-Hispanic) 
     d. White (Non-Hispanic) 
     e. Hispanic/Latino/a 
     f. Native American 
     g. Multiracial 
     h. Other 
  3. Are you an international student? 
     a. Yes 
     b. No 
  4. What is your class year?
5. Are you a part of any of the following mentoring groups?
   Posse, Next Generation, College Prep, Gray Scholars
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. What is parent #1’s highest level of education?
   a. Did not complete high school
   b. High school or GED
   c. Some college
   d. Bachelor’s Degree
   e. Master’s Degree
   f. PhD or some advanced graduate degree
   g. Don’t know
   h. Not applicable

7. What is parent #2’s highest level of education?
   a. Did not complete high school
   b. High school or GED
   c. Some college
   d. Bachelor’s Degree
   e. Master’s Degree
   f. PhD or some advanced graduate degree
   g. Don’t know
   h. Not applicable

8. How would you best describe parent #1’s current or most recently held occupation?
   a. Professional (physician, doctor, lawyer, engineer, professor, etc.)
   b. Administration or management
   c. Small business or independent consultant
   d. Clerical or sales worker
   e. Production or agricultural worker
   f. Never employed
   g. I don’t know

9. How would you describe parent #2’s current or most recently held occupation?
   a. Professional (physician, doctor, lawyer, engineer, professor, etc.)
   b. Administration or management
   c. Small business or independent consultant
   d. Clerical or sales worker
   e. Production or agricultural worker
   f. Never employed
   g. I don’t know

Section 2: Extracurricular Activities
10. Did you hold a leadership position in high school? (ex: officer or board member of a student-run club)
    a. Yes
b. No
11. Do you currently hold or have you ever held any of the following types of leadership positions on campus?
   a. Being on the executive board of a club or student organization: Y/N
   b. A campus internship: Y/N
   c. An earned academic position (such as a preceptor or teaching assistant): Y/N
   d. A managerial position in an on-campus job: Y/N
   e. Leadership position in local community groups: Y/N
      i. If they select “yes” for option e: were you connected to this opportunity through someone on campus (professor, advisor, etc.)? Y/N
12. List of clubs/organizations that they can check off with one column for involvement and another column for whether they hold a leadership role in that club/organization. Involvement will be defined as being actively involved in for 1 semester or more.

Section 3: Perceptions
If they answered “yes” to question 11:
13. How easy or difficult was it for you to get involved in a leadership position?
   a. Attaining a leadership position was very easy.
   b. Attaining a leadership position was somewhat easy.
   c. Neutral: attaining a leadership position was not easy, but not difficult either.
   d. Attaining a leadership position was somewhat difficult.
   e. Attaining a leadership position was very difficult.
If they answered “no” to question 11:
14. Why have you never attained a leadership position? Please check all that apply.
   a. I’ve never had the opportunity to do so.
   b. I have been involved in clubs and/or student organizations, but I have never been encouraged to become a leader of those clubs or organizations.
   c. I don’t see myself as a leader.
   d. I don’t think others see me as a leader.
   e. I am not comfortable with my leadership ability.
   f. I don’t think people like me have many opportunities to become student leaders on this campus.
   g. I have no interest in becoming a student leader.
15. Think about the student leaders on campus. Select the response that most closely resembles your personal opinion regarding the availability of leadership roles to students.
   a. I am more likely than other students to have the opportunity to occupy a leadership role, should I choose to pursue one.
   b. I am just as likely as other students to have the opportunity to occupy a leadership role, should I choose to pursue one.
   c. I am somewhat less likely than other students to have the opportunity to occupy the leadership role, should I choose to pursue one.
   d. I am much less likely than other students to have the opportunity to occupy the leadership role.
   e. I do not think leadership roles are or would be accessible to me, should I choose to pursue one.
The following set of questions each present a statement. Please slide the scale to select a number from 1 to 5 to express your agreement or disagreement with each statement. For each scale, 1
16. White students are more likely than students of other races to hold leadership positions on campus.
17. Female students are less likely than male students to hold leadership positions on campus.
18. Students who don’t have to work are more likely than students who have jobs to hold leadership positions on campus.
19. Introverted students are less likely than outgoing students to hold leadership positions on campus.
20. Upperclassmen are more likely than underclassmen to hold leadership positions on campus.
21. People like me are less likely than other students to hold leadership positions.
22. Do you believe that you entered college/university fully able and prepared to be a student leader? Please select a number on the scale below, where 1 is fully able and prepared and 5 is completely unprepared.
23. Would you describe yourself as a leader?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know
24. Please select the response that most closely approximates your personal opinion.
   a. I think leadership is an innate quality that cannot be learned.
   b. I think leadership is a skill that can be learned
25. Please select a number on the scale below in regard to your opinion about how important extracurricular activities are as part of the college experience. 1 represents “not at all important,” 2 represents “somewhat important,” 3 represents “neutral,” 4 represents “important,” and 5 represents “very important.”
26. Please select a number on the scale below in regards to your opinion about how important leadership opportunities are as part of the college experience. 1 represents “not at all important,” 2 represents “somewhat important,” 3 represents “neutral,” 4 represents “important,” and 5 represents “very important.”
27. Please select the response that most closely approximates your personal opinion.
   a. I think leadership positions in college allow students to develop necessary and valuable skills.
   b. I don’t think leadership positions in college have any benefit.
28. If you have had a leadership position on campus, do you feel that it has improved:
   a. Your interpersonal skills? Yes/No
   b. Your organizational/managerial skills? Yes/No
   c. Your confidence? Yes/No
   d. Your problem-solving skills? Yes/No
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section 1: Background
1. What is your class year?
2. With what racial/ethnic category do you identify?
3. With what gender do you identify?
4. Are you an international student?
5. Are you a member of Posse, Next Generation, or Gray Scholars?
6. Are you a first-generation student?
7. Please describe your parent(s)’ highest level of education and most recent employment.

Section 2: High School
8. What kind of high school did you attend? (Size, public/private/charter)
9. Were you involved in extracurricular activities in high school? What kinds of activities? What was the extent of your involvement?
10. Did you hold leadership positions in high school? How did you achieve those positions?
   a. If not, why not? Do you think there was something holding you back?
11. Do you feel that leadership opportunities were accessible to all students in your high school? Why or why not?
12. What did you think was possible for you in terms of extracurricular involvement and leadership in high school (what options did you see for yourself)? What do you think is possible for you now?

Section 3: F&M
13. What extra-curricular activities are you involved in on campus?
14. What did you get involved in first? Why?
15. Do you have any leadership positions or have you had any in the past?
   a. If not, why not? Do you think there is something holding you back?
16. How did you achieve those positions?
17. What was the first leadership position you achieved and why did you decide to do it?
18. When you first arrived on campus, what did you think was possible for you in terms of extracurricular involvement and leadership? What do you think is possible for you now?
19. In your opinion, is there a hierarchy of organizations on campus? How would you describe that hierarchy? (Which organizations are at the top and why? Which are at the bottom and why?)
20. How would you describe your movements in campus organizations? Do you feel that you’ve moved within or among positions and organizations of the same status (lateral) or from lower to higher status positions/organizations (hierarchical)?
21. Do you think student organizations and/or leadership positions are gendered? Do you think they are racialized?
22. Do you think all students have equal access to leadership positions? Why or why not?
23. How would you describe the F&M culture in terms of extra-curricular involvement and leadership (i.e. is there a lot of pressure to be involved? Who is involved? Etc.)?
24. Do you think extracurricular involvement in college is useful? Why or why not?
25. Do you think leadership opportunities in college are useful? Why or why not?
APPENDIX C: TABLES

Table 1. Demographic breakdown of respondents for both the 2015 and 2016 survey compared to the demographic breakdown of the student body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016 Sample</th>
<th>2015 Survey</th>
<th>Student Body</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underclassmen (year 1-2)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upperclassmen (year 3-4)</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle SES</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-First-Generation</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Not all respondents answered all survey questions, so some numbers/percentages do not add up to 100. The percentages provided for racial composition of the student body only include domestic students; there is no publicly available information about the racial composition of international students.

Table 2. Student leaders by gender and race (2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Omitting Minority-Majority Clubs</th>
<th>% of Student Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>65.39</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 This distinction is made for the purpose of identifying whether racial minority students are more likely to attain leadership positions in these clubs versus mainstream organizations. The percentages for the racial composition of the student body do not add up to 100. International students were not included in these calculations, as information about their racial composition is not publicly available. They account for 17.1% of the student population.
Table 2a. Types of student organizations by race (2017): Statistically significant (p < 0.05) given in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greek Life Organizations (GLO)</th>
<th>Minority-Majority Organizations</th>
<th>Other Mainstream Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>Nearly 27% held leadership positions in GLO.</td>
<td>Less than 1% held leadership positions in MM groups.</td>
<td>73% held leadership positions in other mainstream groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td>9% held positions in GLO.</td>
<td>64% held positions in MM groups.</td>
<td>26% held positions in other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
<td>12% held positions in GLO.</td>
<td>37% held positions in MM groups.</td>
<td>51% held positions in other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>19% held positions in GLO.</td>
<td>44% held positions in MM groups.</td>
<td>37% held positions in other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>20% held positions in GLO.</td>
<td>10% held positions in MM groups.</td>
<td>70% held positions in other groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Leadership Positions Available</th>
<th>1-3 positions = low availability</th>
<th>4-6 positions = moderate</th>
<th>7-10 positions = high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None had low availability.</td>
<td>4% had low availability.</td>
<td>13% had low availability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% had moderate availability.</td>
<td>51% had moderate availability.</td>
<td>87% had moderate availability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94% had high availability.</td>
<td>45% had high availability.</td>
<td>None had high availability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. 2016 Survey Results: Statistically significant (p < 0.05) findings given in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Leadership</strong></td>
<td>63% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
<td>34.5% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Difficulty</strong></td>
<td>64% felt attaining a leadership position is easy; none felt it is difficult.</td>
<td>50% felt attaining a leadership position is easy; 30% felt it is difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Likelihood</strong></td>
<td>43% felt they were more likely and 10% felt they were less likely than their peers to be student leaders.</td>
<td>19% felt they were more likely and 38.5% felt they were less likely than their peers to be student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>51.5% felt opportunities were restricted based on race, class, and gender; 47% felt they were restricted to at least one of these groups; 1.5% felt they were not restricted. 17% felt opportunities were less accessible to them than their peers.</td>
<td>13% felt opportunities were restricted based on race, class, and gender; 78% felt they were restricted to at least one of these groups; 9% felt they were not restricted. 40% felt opportunities were less accessible to them than their peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings of Preparation</strong></td>
<td>59% felt prepared to take on leadership roles upon arriving on campus. 17% felt unprepared.</td>
<td>28% felt prepared to take on leadership roles upon arriving on campus. 36% felt unprepared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 75</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Compilation of 2015 and 2016 Survey Data: Statistically significant (p < 0.05) findings given in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Leadership</strong></td>
<td>56% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
<td>34% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Likelihood</strong></td>
<td>26% felt they were more likely and 3% felt they were less likely than their peers to be student leaders.</td>
<td>11% felt they were more likely and 31% felt they were less likely than their peers to be student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>21% felt opportunities were restricted based on race.</td>
<td>57% felt opportunities were restricted based on race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 182</td>
<td>n = 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Mentoring Programs: Statistically significant (p < 0.05) findings given in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Involved in a Mentoring Program</th>
<th>Not Involved in a Mentoring Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>n = 0</td>
<td>n = 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
<td>30% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59% felt prepared to be a leader.</td>
<td>12% felt prepared to be a leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17% felt unprepared to be a leader.</td>
<td>41% felt unprepared to be a leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80% had high self-efficacy.</td>
<td>58% had high self-efficacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.5% believe the opportunity structure is skewed by race, class and gender.</td>
<td>0% believe the opportunity structure is skewed by race, class and gender; 87.5% believed it is skewed only by race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-White</strong></td>
<td>n = 9</td>
<td>n = 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
<td>30% indicated they are student leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.5% felt prepared to be a leader.</td>
<td>12% felt prepared to be a leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25% felt unprepared to be a leader.</td>
<td>41% felt unprepared to be a leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87.5% had high self-efficacy.</td>
<td>58% had high self-efficacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43% believe the opportunity structure is skewed by race, class, and gender; 57% believe it is skewed only by race.</td>
<td>0% believe the opportunity structure is skewed by race, class and gender; 87.5% believed it is skewed only by race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High SES</strong></td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
<td>93% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle SES</strong></td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>n = 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low SES</strong></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td>n = 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
<td>75% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-Generation</strong></td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
<td>73% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not First-Generation</strong></td>
<td>n = 3</td>
<td>n = 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
<td>93.5% felt leadership positions in college are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All respondents</strong></td>
<td>n = 9</td>
<td>n = 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20% felt attaining a leadership position is easy; 40% felt it is difficult.</td>
<td>66% felt attaining a leadership position is easy; 2% felt it is difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>