Digital activism of first-generation college students
Networked counterstorytelling: a mechanistic model for social capital formation

Doctoral candidate: Kristi Johns
Dissertation chair: Dr. Melanie Bertrand

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

First generation college students (FGCS) comprise an estimated 50% of higher education.

However, nationally, only 11% of low-income FGCS leave college with a degree within six years.

In an education system not designed for their success, financial & academic supports for FGCS are necessary, but not enough.

They also need social networks to validate their experience, provide guidance & connections, and instill a sense of belonging.

Generating valuable social capital can provide FGCS the psychosocial and structural networks needed to successfully navigate college.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do FGCS describe their experiences navigating higher education? In what ways do these experiences relate to social capital?

How does networked counterstorytelling influence FGCS sense of belonging? And how does it influence the social networks of FGCS?

INNOVATION

FGCS will lead a grassroots social media campaign to share their personal stories and generate a space for connection and support.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory multistrand MMAR

QUAL
Podcast interviews with 1st gen students
Netnography Focus groups

QUANT
Network analytics
Pre-post survey evaluation

INFERENCES

Frameworks

Counterstorytelling
Networked publics

Networked counterstorytelling

