2022

William & Mary's Institutional Branding and its Influence on the Self-efficacy of First-generation Sophomores as They Select Majors and Career Paths: a Case Study

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WILLIAM & MARY'S INSTITUTIONAL BRANDING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF FIRST-GENERATION SOPHOMORES AS THEY SELECT MAJORS AND CAREER PATHS: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William & Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

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January 2022

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and mentors who helped shaped my values and appreciation of lifelong learning. I share my gratitude for the support, patience, and sacrifice while I journeyed through the academic commitment of doctoral study. I will keep your words of encouragement and direction close as I move forward. 1-4-3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the committee members who guided me through this dissertation and who provided their support and influence throughout my academic experience at William & Mary. I am grateful for their knowledge and practice of leadership within higher education.

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ABSTRACT

My case study focused on the message communicated through the university's fundraising campaign titled For the Bold and sought to determine if the campaign messaging influenced decision-making of first-generation sophomores (FGS) attending William & Mary as they selected majors and formed career choices. The campaign message emphasized the benefits of boldness, and, for FGS, the campaign's message could have shaped their self-efficacy beliefs as they pursued majors and professional aspirations. The study applied Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory to determine how self-efficacy contributed to the decisions made by participants. Additionally, the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) developmental ecology model helped situate the participants' motivations tied to the backgrounds and surroundings of FGS as they progressed through their second-year experience of higher education. An online survey was administered in Fall 2020 to all 149 FGS at William & Mary to determine the levels of self-efficacy beliefs among the group. A total of 42 students responded (28% response rate), and 30 volunteered to participate in a follow-up interview. Ultimately, 12 students participated in individual virtual interviews. Most of the 12 participants came into college with a major in mind or decided on a major in their first year after taking a series of courses. Findings from these interviews determined a high awareness of the For the Bold campaign among participants yet scant influence of the branded fundraising campaign on the decisions the participants made regarding their choice of major or career paths.

WILLIAM & MARY'S INSTITUTIONAL BRANDING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF FIRST-GENERATION SOPHOMORES AS THEY SELECT MAJORS AND CAREER PATHS: A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

William & Mary publicly launched a highly visual fundraising campaign in 2015, combining vision, foresight, and motivation in one message: For the Bold. Recognized as the "boldest fundraising campaign yet" since the institution's start in 1693, the slogan sought to raise $1 billion to support a top-rated education and retainment of a driven student body as the funds helped support the growth of the institution's individual schools, the development of student affairs, and the goals of alumni (William & Mary, 2020a). As stated on the university's website, "The campaign led to wide-ranging transformations across the university and new opportunities and experiences for generations of students, faculty, alumni and staff" (William & Mary, 2020a, para. 1). Through what was officially titled For the Bold: The Campaign for William & Mary, the university communicated the $1 billion message to both internal audiences across campus and external stakeholders who held a vested interest in the institution (William & Mary, 2020a).

As the execution of For the Bold branding attempted to inspire its constituents, the progression of the campaign may have also influenced William & Mary students, specifically first-generation sophomores (FGS), and may have resulted in positive and negative consequences as FGS moved closer to completing their degrees (Tolbert, 2014). Yet, in its last year of promoting For the Bold, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption in student routines, behavior, and both physical and mental health (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2021). Campaign messaging continued across campus, as in the example provided in Figure 1, which promoted a bold community even during the unprecedented time. The campus

COVID-19 plan provided some limited opportunities for in-person course work and options for remote learning. By Spring 2021, of the nearly 1800 students responding to a William & Mary survey, 384 had received full vaccinations, 1,007 had received one vaccine shot, and 368 planned to get vaccinated, with 24 reporting that they did not want the vaccination (Staff, 2021).

Figure 1

William & Mary's For the Bold Campaign Graphic

Note. This graphic design represented one image that was distributed to promote the campaign. Permission granted by William & Mary's University Marketing.

Motivation for Institutional Branding

From Harvard's start in 1636 to today's more modern campuses of higher learning, college and university leaders have executed academic missions and structured curriculum alongside the ongoing promotion of their public image. As this self-promotion grows increasingly necessary, so does the strategic branding of academic identification (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014). Higher education institutions openly compete for more students, funding, and academic leadership by using prestige and education programs as leverage to entice students to attend. Institutions of higher education also remain wedged between branding their identities to

targeted publics and the limitations met by their own reputations and history of tradition (Newman et al., 2004). Moreover, colleges are branding their institutions in the advertising market typically designed for large companies and industry.

Institutional branding represents a simplified collection of influential images, facts, emotional triggers, and memorable experiences, which are used to persuade the public mind. Notably, leaders of higher education institutions attempt to maximize opportunities to strengthen institutional identity by managing carefully crafted messages and by developing branding practices as tools to differentiate from competitors, especially during financial and cultural shifts (Bulotaite, 2003). “When a university is growing or if the conditions in the marketplace are changing, the received identity will help the university to adapt and to find its way forward” (Bulotaite, 2003, p. 450). Therefore, the strength of academic reputations may motivate higher education institutions to uncomfortably market education as a commodity and lifestyle option to attract prospective students to their campuses (Tolbert, 2014). What remains unknown is how these attempts at branding influence students, in particular those who are first-generation.

Strategic Tools of Institutional Branding

Moving beyond academic tradition, universities and colleges commonly search for effective branding campaigns like For the Bold, which are designed to address economic demands and to communicate with key publics (Tolbert, 2014). The strategic placement of William & Mary’s For the Bold messaging on its web pages and literature reflected the institution’s campus climate and the intent to motivate its external and internal communities (William & Mary, 2020a). “This is crucially important to W&M’s excellence in the 21st century” (as cited in University Advancement Staff, 2016, para. 2), stated William & Mary’s former president Taylor Reveley. “The William & Mary community is rallying behind For the

Bold with enormous enthusiasm and powerful effect" (as cited in University Advancement Staff, 2016, para. 2). Part of the campaign's goal was to raise funding for student scholarships. The implementation of the campaign paralleled with a challenge faced by most higher education institutions, including the continual balance of building diverse student enrollment while also attracting and retaining first-generation college students (Gofen, 2009).

Statement of Problem

The architecture of branding a message may be structured for the unique needs of each higher education institution and its target audiences based on the message frequency required to produce the desired motivational outcome (Chapelo, 2015). William & Mary's FGS represent some of the receivers of For the Bold's crafted message as they simultaneously pursued academic knowledge and professional development on campus (Chapelo, 2015). Consequently, the institution's FGS may have experienced exaggerated self-efficacy levels based on the interpretation of the campaign's language (Bandura, 1986). Those FGS attending William & Mary who held high levels of self-efficacy may have anticipated positive results, whereas the students who experienced low self-efficaciousness may have sabotaged advantageous outcomes due to self-doubt and the development of below-average aspirations (Bandura, 1986). Noting that, "people are partly the product of their environment" (Bandura, 1986, p. 135), my focus on FGS builds on key research on the overarching challenges faced by first-generation students and recorded evidence of the selection process of academic majors and professional pursuits by undergraduates.

First-generation College Students

Recognized as the first in their families to attend an institution of higher education, first-generation college students often enter the scholarly setting while encountering academic and

social obstacles that may seem foreign to traditional undergraduates who have matured in households with strong connections to higher education (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). The popular profile of first-generation college students follows a repetitive template of circumstances: older females from a lower socioeconomic status who are also parents and work while enrolled in college courses (Giancola et al., 2008). Moreover, evidence indicates that levels of education become inherited from parents to their children, similar to social status and occupations.

However, not all first-generation college students fall into this socioeconomic situation or academic environment, and even if so, they hold the ability to move beyond the lack of college experience within their family settings through what is referred to as family resilience (Gofen, 2009). "The core idea underlying the concept of family resilience is that a family can overcome adverse circumstances by using its behavioral, emotional, and relational assets" (Gofen, 2009, p. 106). By better applying non-material resources, specifically time and prioritization of goals, first-generation students increase their odds of breaking the patterns passed down through generations—a concept which supports the ideology communicated through William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.

This case study followed a heuristic approach, which attempted to broaden what is already known about an issue or possibly provide a fresh perspective altogether (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher, I focused on the confidence and capabilities of William & Mary's FGS who came from both traditional and non-traditional families. Notably, the study's qualitative nature placed considerable emphasis on the measurement of their self-efficacy beliefs. "How people behave can be predicted by what they believe themselves capable of accomplishing" (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014, p. 47). However, it must be recognized that during the 2020-2021 academic

year, the university's FGS were also attempting to follow the direction and guidelines set by the U.S. CDC (2021), which were enforced by William & Mary to prevent additional spreading of COVID-19.

Levels of human ability depend on the management of motivational, behavioral, cognitive and social skills, and emotional manipulation, and these levels of human ability may have influenced William & Mary's FGS during their formative periods of self-efficacy development (Bandura, 1986). This student development becomes even more significant when considering how higher education serves as a direct path to individual economic growth, professional opportunity, and social status (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). Previous research highlights patterns of choice made by female students, particularly the selection of disciplines that offer less income and growth potential. Despite factual data confirming that women rank higher than men in enrollment, retention, and program completion, female students tend to seek familiar roles in nursing and teaching rather than engineering and other male-dominated fields (Johnson & Muse, 2017). What remains unknown is how FGS, in general, select their majors.

William & Mary's For the Bold campaign addressed its campus community as a united group possessing a high level of strong self-efficacy as it progressed academically and culturally (William & Mary, 2020a). Additionally, as the campaign coincided with the critical timeframe of determining academic disciplines and career options, the possibility existed that FGS managed a triangulation of balancing individual confidence levels, professional projection, and the institution's strategic messaging (Johnson & Muse, 2017).

> Choice of academic major is expected to correlate with a belief in one's ability to perform different academic tasks—such as effective writing and speaking, critical

> thinking, analysis of quantitative problems, using computing and information technology, working independently, or working in a team environment. (p. 317)

However, perceived self-efficacy beliefs often direct or redirect planned outcomes as a determinant of occupational interests and obtainable professional goals (Bandura, 1986). The possible influence of William & Mary's campaign messaging on its FGS, along with expectations of their future gains after graduation, may have shifted from their original academic plans.

The Second-Year Experience

First impressions established during the initial stages of higher education serve as early predictors of academic success. Moreover, as a common practice within higher education settings, universities and colleges generally create programs to support academic and social concerns as students attempt to maximize their first-year experience on campus. Unfortunately, both male and female college sophomores reportedly receive less attention from faculty and student affairs, leading to isolation and lower grade point averages (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). Research on the academic progress of this student group acknowledged that, "Sophomores were less likely than students in other classes to be actively involved with their own learning or to see faculty as actively engaged in their personal and academic development" (Graunke & Woosley, 2005, p. 369). However, William & Mary's recognition of boldness through the message of the For the Bold campaign may have helped fill a gap in the second-year experience formed through the traditional structure of a well-established scholarly system (Graunke & Woosley, 2005).

Additionally, student-faculty relationships and student engagement represent determinants on student retention and graduation rates. This calls for educators to place greater attention on college sophomores who are constructing their academic paths that lead toward

social and professional mobility (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). “Increasingly, the second-year is being viewed as a time of moratorium, in which students seek to solidify their career decisions and personal goals” (Graunke & Woosley, 2005, p. 329). The second-year experience manages the critical progression from required general education courses to specific academic majors, all under a community setting that frequently creates a disconnect between sophomores, academic organizations, and the development of ideas (Graunke & Woosley, 2005), which differs greatly from the united message promoted under the For the Bold campaign (William & Mary, 2020a).

Contextual Influences on First-generation College Students

As this study explored the influence of William & Mary’s branding approach on FGS, it considered that only 73% of first-generation students who enter higher education continue on as sophomores (Lightweis, 2014). The study considered the determinants of college preparation, student goals, family and peer support, and institutional environment leading up to degree completion (Lightweis, 2014) as it recognized that the expectations of academic outcome fueled the actual results for most college students upon graduation (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Following their enrollment, William & Mary’s FGS may have faced challenges in the academic and social environments of the university. Under a social cognitive lens, the two environments and determinants may have allowed for greater self-influence (Bandura, 1986) and contributed to the mission of William & Mary’s For the Bold campaign.

I applied Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) developmental ecology model to consider individual values and perspectives of William & Mary’s FGS, which may have helped shaped their self-efficacy beliefs. A developmental psychologist known for his research in early childhood development, Bronfenbrenner (1993) breaks down his model into five contextual levels. For this case study, I specifically focus on his microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and

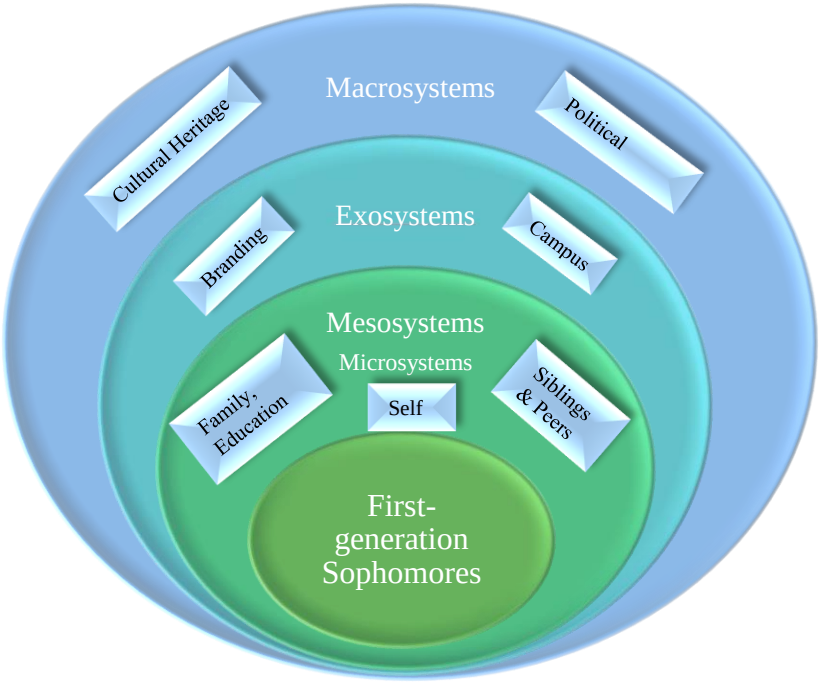
macrosystems. Considering that, “Behavior is a function of the interaction of the person and the environment” (Evans, 2010, p. 160), the ecology model places emphasis on the individual and influence on his or her environment as character development occurs. Through the adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) model, I considered the possibility that the campaign’s influence cut across the contextual categories within microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems and, consequently, motivated FGS to act on the distributed message of For the Bold in their selection of majors and their building of career aspirations.

Microsystems

Moving through the first contextual level of Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) ecological model, I positioned William & Mary’s FGS in the center and considered any patterns of close personal relationships that controlled engagement and interaction within immediate environmental settings. Under my adaptation, Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) microsystems level focused on the support and values connected to FGS (see Figure 2) as instrumental relationships between parents, peers and self, which served to regulate the academic success for each individual FGS student (Paat, 2013). Notably, educational experiences of siblings and peers may have contributed to the FGS’ knowledge of higher education more so than the backgrounds of their parents as they did not attend college (Inman & Mayes, 1999).

Figure 2

Application of the Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Developmental Ecological Model



Note. This adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's model adds contextual framework to first-generation sophomores and sources of influence from individuals, environments, and values.

By focusing on individual behavior at the microsystems level, this study concentrated on high to low stages of self-efficacy beliefs that shaped self-esteem and academic capability (Bandura, 1986; Paat, 2013). I examined possible connections between the For the Bold campaign and the personal confidence levels of individuals within the FGS group, specifically that of self-identity (Foster, 2017). "Students may lack information about themselves (suggesting low self-identity) when making academic major choices" (Foster, 2017, p. 366). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's (1993) model assisted in recognizing any personality traits of the participating FGS, like openness and optimism, that proved beneficial during the academic progression of William & Mary's FGS (Foster, 2017).

Mesosystems

Possible influential pressures shouldered by FGS were included in the next level of context: mesosystems. Stemming from intimate relationships formed between the individual and his or her immediate encounters, specifically family members, mesosystems represent two or more microsystems as they shape personal and professional outcomes (Paat, 2013). As this study acknowledged, the combination of family, social, and cultural investments provided opportunities for parents of first-generation college students to serve as role models and to encourage lifelong learning (Gofen, 2009). Notably, family beliefs and value systems, not financial stability, of FGS may provide the necessary strength to end the intergenerational repetition tied to higher education (Gofen, 2009). "The concept of family capital captures the various ways in which the family affects the future of its children, especially with respect to the investment process" (Gofen, 2009, p. 107). Moreover, William & Mary's For the Bold campaign may have directly and indirectly built on this family capital investment as viewed under the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) mesosystems.

Exosystems

To align with the case study's research questions, I carried over the pressures and influences identified in the microsystems and mesosystems of William & Mary's FGS over to the next contextual level referred to as the exosystems (Paat, 2013). Representing the relationships built between members of higher education, mainly faculty and the institution's FGS, this study applied Bronfenbrenner's (1993) description of exosystems to explore experiences and influences that existed outside the context of immediate family and peers. "Each year of the undergraduate experience offers students challenges and opportunities and institutions multiple occasions to facilitate student learning and success" (Gahagan & Hunter,

2006, p. 22). However, the percentage of students who shift their selection of academic disciplines at least once in their academic careers ranges between 50% to 70%. Moreover, students in American universities and colleges categorize their selection of unfulfilling majors as a significant disappointment (Foster, 2017).

Compounding the academic demands of higher education, first-generation college students generally find it difficult to join campus populations and, as a result, to build positive relationships with peers and faculty. “Education administrators recognize the responsibility to increase [first-generation college student] populations, but the students often find that institutions do not meet their needs” (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011, p. 57). Educators may attempt to reduce tensions connected to the transition by creating first-generation student programs geared toward achieving productive academic experiences, yet they may isolate first-generation students when providing these support programs rather than integrate students into higher education environments. Also, these programs often operate with minimal promotion or lack of accessibility (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011).

Recognizing the literature, this study acknowledged that, based on the high standards for undergraduate acceptance and continued enrollment, William & Mary’s FGS may have already held the high self-efficacy beliefs necessary to gain academic achievement (Wall, 2019). Moreover, the For the Bold campaign promoted the position that it “plays a vital role in strengthening the educational mission of the university—contributing to the growth in scholarships support, curricular innovation, student-faculty research, study abroad, internships, international initiatives, new facilities, entrepreneurial programs” (Wall, 2019, para. 6), among other areas of academic development across the small, elite campus.

Macrosystems

The macrosystems environment in Bronfenbrenner's (1993) framework related to the relationship between William & Mary's FGS and any overarching religious, political, legal and cultural values that remained present within the progression of the significant second year of higher education (Paat, 2013). "Human beings are not only the partial products, but also the partial producers of their environments" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 6), thus how the external environment influenced the FGS' decisions on majors and in turn how the students influenced the environment was important. This perspective receives support as Susan Hanna Gerdelman (2019), chairperson of For the Bold, shared a message in June 2019 regarding the influence of William & Mary's campaign, specifically the influence of the campaign on the more than 2000 undergraduates who received their diplomas that spring. "Months, years and decades will pass and they can look back at their time fondly and remember the bold moments that happened at William & Mary" (Gerdelman, 2019, para. 5). Continuous connections to the For the Bold campaign through language, such as this, set the context in which students were learning and choosing majors. However, if FGS faced any risks of academic performance or adjustment, the intent of the For the Bold message may have become altered or eclipsed altogether (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to explore the influence, if any existed, on the self-efficacy belief levels of FGS that may have stemmed from William & Mary's For the Bold campaign as the students selected academic majors and began to pursue professional goals. My research concentrated on the self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS as a means of measurement to determine the campaign's influence during such a critical, academic timeframe.

During the Fall 2020 semester, the institution enrolled 6,236 undergraduates, with females totaling more than half (59%) of all William & Mary undergraduates (3,665 women compared to 2,571 men) (Univstats, 2021). Out of that number, 149 (2.4%) were enrolled as first-generation sophomores (C. Springer, personal communication, September 25, 2020).

The FGS who combined their subjective understanding of William & Mary's branded For the Bold messaging to possible exaggerated self-efficacy beliefs may have pursued academic majors that were ill-suited for their own capabilities. Additionally, they may have worked toward academic achievement while balancing employment and family demands, which then may have sent their expected outcomes from acts of boldness further out of reach (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory suggests that as female students enter higher education institutions, they must own strong levels of self-efficacy to select non-traditional disciplines (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, to explore For the Bold's level of impact on William & Mary's FGS, I asked the following two research questions:

1. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy of first-generation sophomores?
    a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major?
    b. Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?
2. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals?

a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals?
b. Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?

Significance of Study

This research focused on FGS during the pivotal period for these students when they determined their academic majors and career paths, which occurred concurrent to the context of William & Mary's prestigious $1 billion fundraising campaign. Significant to this study is the intention to better serve the interests and abilities of FGS as awareness of the influence of institutional branding on self-efficacy beliefs increases. The study serves individual schools at higher education institutions as educators prepare for FGS to declare their majors. Moreover, the creation of a model was designed to use my findings to track the influence on self-efficacy beliefs and the outcome of decisive behaviors based on institutional branding. The model may also serve as a template for advancement and communications teams within higher education institutions as they plan future branding strategies. Lastly, this case illustrates how FGS processed and interpreted the messaging stemming from the $1 billion campaign.

Overview of Literature Review

In Chapter 2, I discuss how both the beliefs and regulation of self-efficacy, as it relates to FGS, vary with each individual student and their individual understanding and awareness of institutional branding. Equally important, institutional branding remains specific to targeted audiences and reflects the specific history of individual institutions. I incorporate an in-depth perspective taken from literature about marketing higher education and the hesitations of entering a capitalist environment typically reserved for business corporations in pursuit of profit, stressing the difficulty of transitioning from the traditional approaches applied to reach academic

constituents to the marketing strategies executed to compete in a student-driven environment (Newman et al., 2004).

Also in Chapter 2, I support the foundation of this case study by presenting Bandura's (1986) previous research on social cognitive theory and self-efficacy beliefs and research conducted on the academic and social challenges faced by first-generation college students. I explain why Bandura's (1986) work effectively served as a theoretical framework for my focal point on FGS at William & Mary as I concentrated on the overarching concept of the implementation of institutional branding and its influence on the student group. Noting Bandura's (1993) claim, "People motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily by the exercise of forethought" (Bandura, 1993, p. 128), I relied on his social cognitive theory to gain insight on the influence of branding as William & Mary's FGS transitioned from completing general education courses to making critical decisions regarding their academic majors and possible professions.

Overview of Methodology and Analysis

Under the lens of a constructivist paradigm and a descriptive research approach, my case study explored the appeal and effectiveness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign as FGS directed themselves toward academic disciplines and career fields. In doing so, the study provided answers to the two research questions centered on FGS and the influence of institutional branding at William & Mary. In Chapter 3, I discuss the purpose behind the design of an online survey and my decision to form open-ended questions for the collection of narrative responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I discuss the qualitative data collected through individual virtual interviews from a sample of my student population in Chapter 4. My findings ultimately revealed limited evidence of connectivity between William & Mary's institutional

branding and the academic and professional goals of FGS. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings and implications for practice.

Definition of Terms

More than 30 years of previous research regarding the impact of self-efficacy beliefs on human activity, which ranges from one single institution to a global scale of higher education institutions, aided this case study's focus on FGS at William & Mary and the evidence of the impact of branding. The general terms listed below offer specific definitions as they relate to my case study. The definitions also aim to provide clarity and to support the two research questions designed for this case study.

First-generation student

First-generation students represent the first children to attend a higher education institution within their family unit (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Influence

In this study, the term refers to Bandura's (1993) concepts on self-efficacy and their possible connection to the influence of William & Mary's institutional branding on the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS as they selected academic disciplines and determined career goals.

Institutional Branding

For this study, the term refers to the strategic implementation of communicating messages through available media channels across higher education campuses. Institutional branding may serve external purposes as universities and colleges compete for new students and resources (Topsail Group, 2018). However, my study focuses mostly on internal branding and the attempt to reach the student body, faculty, administration, and alumni within William & Mary through William & Mary's For the Bold campaign (Sujchaphong et al., 2015).

Messaging

In the fields of communications and marketing, the term refers to the sharing (physically and electronically) of an idea, mission, or value of a business or organization though appropriate outlets to motivate targeted audiences. For this case study, William & Mary used messaging to increase awareness of and support for For the Bold campaign goals (Lumen, 2020).

Perceived Self-Efficacy

In this study, Bandura's (1989) research on self-efficacy refers to FGS and their personal beliefs in their own abilities and self-worth. I attempted to connect institutional branding, specifically messages communicated through William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, to the perceived self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS as they selected their academic disciplines and attempted to realize their academic goals.

Reachability

The term refers to the marketing possibility of access to a person or object (Melichar & Brennan, 2017). In this study, I explored the impact of reachability regarding William & Mary's institutional branding of the For the Bold campaign on FGS.

Targeted audience

The group represents individuals who share similar demographics and specific interests and show promise to the sender of a message (Smith, 2012). In this case, the sender of the message represents William & Mary and the receiver represents William & Mary's FGS.

Traditionally-gendered Major

This term refers to an academic major that is typically pursued by one gender. For example, nursing and K-12 education tracks show high numbers of females enrolled whereas engineering and physics tracks reflect male-dominated enrollment (Johnson & Muse, 2017).

Summary

This case study considered how the branding approaches of William & Mary and other higher education institutions were employed as they attempted to manage historic reputations and, in some circumstances, to earn academic recognition by building academic identities (Judson et al., 2006). Notably, "Various technological and social changes, however, are eroding the monopoly that universities once had over intellectual resources and privileges" (Judson et al., 2006, p. 98). I recognized that 4-year institutions no longer operate under an elitist environment established decades and centuries ago nor do they enjoy a sense of independence from the critique of stakeholders and concerned publics (Loving & Cramerding, 2016).

Under this premise, my case study explored how FGS may have interpreted William & Mary's messaging as the institution distributed its campaign slogan For the Bold. A subjective understanding of acting bold may hold rational and irrational consequences when acted upon by FGS, particularly as they committed to their appropriate academic tracks (Bandura, 1986). William & Mary strategically promoted the For the Bold slogan on banners and flags across its campus, which held the potential of reaching wide audiences with connections to the institution, including FGS (William & Mary, 2020a). However, as Bandura (1986) emphasized, methods of persuasion, similar to William & Mary's campaign messaging, may produce negative results for some individuals when prompted to reach for goals under misguided self-efficacy beliefs of capability.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Institutional branding, like that used in the For the Bold fundraising campaign at William & Mary, is growing increasingly necessary as competition in the field of higher education intensifies. The practice of branding also contributes to how others perceive institutions, particularly for future college students searching for a suitable match for their college choice. Academics and reputation represent the first two determining factors for college selection, with location and costs following closely behind (Judson et al., 2006). Notably, the implementation of institutional branding remains active across campuses well after students have made academic commitments and transition into their university or colleges (Judson et al., 2006). Because strategic communication plays a significant role in forming academic identities, the influence of branding on targeted audiences is important to understand (Newman et al., 2004).

For the purpose of this case study, William & Mary's first-generation sophomores (FGS) were identified as the population of interest. This student group represented an important audience to understand more fully, especially how they, as part of the intended receivers of messaging from a historically successful campaign, were influenced in making decisions about their declared major and their career aspirations. However, this case study was publicly launched prior to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the critical changes that William & Mary leaders implemented as of March 2020 to maintain a safe and healthy campus. These changes altered how all students, including FGS, received course instruction, interacted with peers and mentors, and accessed campus resources.

Branding of Higher Education

The founding of many of the nation's colleges emerged due to a need to educate early leaders on how to provide service to the public (Thelin et al., 2020). Over time, the increase in the number of higher education institutions created an environment in which colleges and universities compete for students. One form of this competition includes institutions seeking prestige (Morphew & Baker, 2004). The strategic planning by institutional leaders to establish prestigious identities aligns as a logical, competitive business tactic. However, this singular focus elicits criticism given the possibility of overshadowing student needs in the process (Newman et al., 2004). Although higher education administrators use their communicative experience when working directly with lobbyists and public relations practitioners to publicly brand their reputations (Judson et al., 2006), the inclusion of higher education institutions to an environment filled with visible marketing and promotions remains more familiar to community stakeholders than to academic leaders (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014).

Designing and Managing the Message

The For the Bold campaign set a standard for institutional branding as William & Mary depended heavily on the philanthropic motivation of alumni and key stakeholders to support the overarching goals of the institution (William & Mary, 2020a). The campaign may have benefited due to successful institutional branding as "a successful brand delivers sustainable competitive advantage and invariably results in superior profitability and market performance" (Chapelo, 2015, p. 151). The controlled messaging implemented through the fundraising campaign also targeted internal student audiences including William & Mary's FGS who came from a range of backgrounds, which may have influenced how they interpreted the For the Bold branding (Bandura, 1986; Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). This qualitative study considered if the

campaign influenced FGS' choice of academic disciplines for a major or contributed to how the students considered their professional goals. Of particular interest was how levels of self-efficacy beliefs of FGS linked either positively or negatively to the campaign's message of boldness.

The Launch of For the Bold

William & Mary received national attention in 2015 following its public announcement of For the Bold: The Campaign for William and Mary. This campaign launch was strategically scheduled over the institution's Homecoming weekend with a campaign goal set to raise $1 billion to fulfill three major institutional goals: learning, engagement, and impact. Matthew Lambert, Vice President of Advancement, aimed for active participation from all audiences through the message of boldness, even setting the goal of getting 40% of undergraduate alumni to support the institution's mission by donating to the campaign (Wallace, 2017).

Undergraduates who were currently enrolled during the campaign's execution at William & Mary received the opportunity to serve as For the Bold ambassadors by communicating the message of boldness through a peer-to-peer approach with fellow students. To involve undergraduate student volunteers, Lambert encouraged the ambassadors to remain in contact with at least 10 William & Mary students to promote engagement and institutional giving (Wallace, 2018). Notably, William & Mary's alumni were recognized for giving as 71.5% of alumni continue to offer donations annually, positioning the small university as receiving "one of the highest donor retention rates" (Wall, 2019, para. 15) across the country. This loyalty and willingness to invest reflects the actions of William & Mary's undergraduate alumni giving, which in 2019 was recorded at 26.4%. The global pandemic affected the giving rates of student participation, which was below the amount of 50% targeted for 2022 (see https://giving.wm.edu/types-of-gifts/senior-class-gift/).

Successful Completion of the For the Bold Campaign

More than 100 thousand donors gave to the campaign since its inception, which brought the amount raised to $1.04 billion upon completion (Wall, 2020). William & Mary President Katherine A. Rowe recognized the success of For the Bold, stating (as cited by Wall, 2020, para. 13), "Our generous donors to the For the Bold campaign have invested in efforts that push us beyond the status quo and into bold new ventures to increase equity, inclusion, grit and creativity." Notably, 15,062 students were among those who supported the historic campaign (Wall, 2020). FGS at the university may have processed the branded messaging encouraged and supported by the William & Mary community during a time when they were also determining their choice of major and future career trajectories (Bandura, 1989). However, the FGS were moving forward as second-year students during an unprecedented 2020-2021 academic year, which included hybrid learning environments, social and physical distancing, COVID-19 testing, mask-wearing enforcements, and limitations of campus space and resources.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Bandura's (1993) social cognitive theory, which posits that individuals must strengthen their ability to regulate their own social, affective, and motivational factors, in addition to their cognitive development, to achieve academic success. Bandura (1986) recognized the inability for these skills to produce academic benefits if students lacked persistence when challenged or evaluated. Social cognitive theory highlights how individuals limit themselves from achieving greater knowledge and expertise if they have low levels of perceived self-efficacy that instills a fear of trying altogether. This type of fear runs counter to William & Mary's stated messaging in the For the Bold campaign.

Next, I discuss Bandura's (1986) model of triadic reciprocal causation (TRC), which served as a directional tool for my data analysis. I further explain how the trilogy of this causal model, specifically personal, environmental, and behavioral determinants, may have guided FGS at William & Mary when considering how patterns of thought and emotional responses stem from one's confidence or doubt in capability (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's (1986) research acknowledges how external factors from one's environment act as internal determinants of self-efficacy beliefs. Individuals are incapable of living fully in autonomous settings dictated solely by their own actions. Instead, students will react to their environment.

> [Individuals] create devices that compensate immensely for their sensory and physical limitations, circumvent environmental constraints, redesign and construct environments to their liking, create styles of behavior that enable them to realise desired outcomes and pass on the effective ones to others by social modeling and other experiential means. (Bandura, 1986, p. 272)

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory argues that most people successfully realize their goals by implementing the strategy of social reliance through the sharing of knowledge, talents, and available resources: a context that closely mirrors climates within higher education.

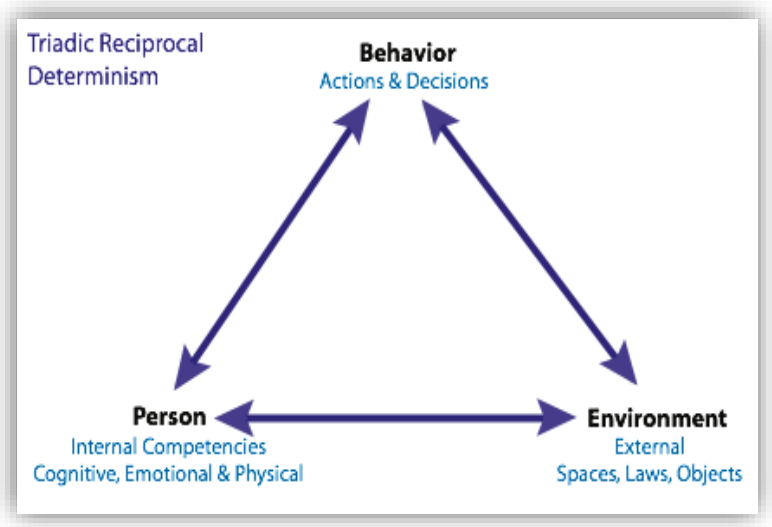
Model of Triadic Reciprocal Causation and Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Bandura's (1986) causal model of TRC (see Figure 3) bridges social cognitive theory to interactions within the environment and to individual actions and decisions. Under this concept of triadic reciprocity, Bandura (1986) defines reciprocal as "the mutual action between two causal factors" (p. 23). In this case study, I used his TRC model to focus on a small group of FGS as they made decisions regarding their major and career choice in an environment that included a major fundraising campaign, namely William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.

Triadic reciprocal causation refers to how personal abilities, environmental situations, and behavior collectively hold various levels of influence on self-efficacy beliefs during any given situation. “False beliefs activate avoidant behavior that keep individuals out of touch with prevailing reality, thus creating a strong reciprocal interaction between beliefs and action” (Bandura, 1986, p. 24). Applying the three determinants of Bandura’s (1986) model of TRC to this case study helped in coding individual virtual interviews with the university’s FGS to discover what elements predominantly shaped their decision-making process and academic outcomes. The dynamic nature of this model highlighted nuances of FGS experiences (e.g., behavior, person, environment).

Figure 3

Bandura’s Model of Triadic Reciprocal Causation (Triadic Reciprocal Determinism)



Note. In Bandura’s (1986) model, a dominant determinant of influence on self-efficacy beliefs may surface.

Bandura (1989) built on the idea that social development relies on the overlapping agents of behavior, personal abilities, and events existing within specific environments. Based on his social cognitive theory, the FGS at William & Mary were developing within a TRC system in

which their actions were driven from causal contributions. Bandura's (1986) framework allowed for a deeper analysis to better understand how the students' levels of self-efficacy influenced their selection of academic majors and career paths. Furthermore, my study discussed how the capabilities and career choices of William & Mary's FGS were possibly affected by the external environment of the institution and, in particular, through the implementation of the For the Bold campaign (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

According to Bandura (1993), "Those who have a high sense of efficacy visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance" (p. 118). Thus, the FGS at William & Mary who participated in my case study and held high levels of self-efficacy may have imagined successful future scenarios. However, those with self-doubting and lower self-efficacy levels may have perceived fewer options and foreseen failure, which may have developed into actual outcomes (Bandura, 1993). The ability to envision a prosperous path may have been influenced by the For the Bold campaign from 2015 to 2020, which emphasized the success of William & Mary students during this timeframe.

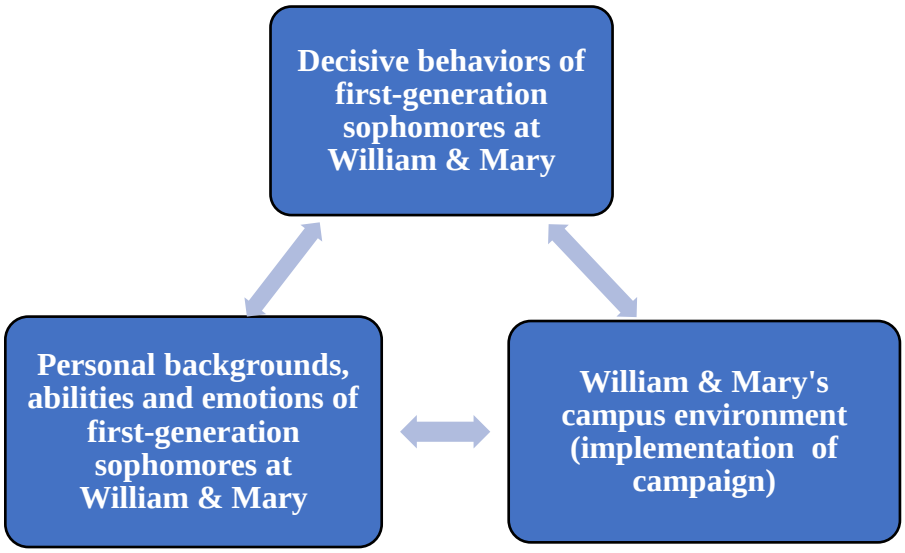
Bandura (1986) claimed that higher levels of self-efficacy also lead to greater persistence, recognizing how individuals who hold strong self-efficacy beliefs tend to overcome challenges with a positive perspective and those with weaker beliefs back away from realistic goals due to low confidence in their capabilities.

> Efficacy and outcome judgments are differentiated because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but they do not act on that outcome belief because they question whether they can actually execute the necessary activities. (Bandura, 1986, p. 392)

Inserting the elements of the context for this study into an adaptation of Bandura's (1986) TRC model showcases the interactions among the self-efficacy levels of case participants, the branding of the For the Bold campaign, and William & Mary's campus environment (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Adaptation of Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model



Note. This case study adapted Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation model to highlight a dominant determinant of influence on self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores at William & Mary.

The three determinants within Bandura's (1986) model of TRC offered significance on multiple platforms, extending further than the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS at William & Mary. For example, families of several FGS participants in the case study also held perspectives on career goals and college engagement that potentially hindered or enhanced pre-college expectations and planning during matriculating to campus (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). "For activities in which outcomes are either inherent to the actions or tightly linked by social codes,

outcome expectancies cannot be disjoined from the self-judged performances from which they flow" (Bandura, 1986, p. 392). Notably, the FGS' expectations of academic outcomes depended on their own perceived self-efficacy beliefs and involvement within William & Mary's campus community, as well as the personal influences existing outside of the university. Through the adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC, I provided additional insight into the influence of the For the Bold campaign on FGS' experiences and aligned levels of self-efficacy within this environmental context.

Bandura (1993) also stressed the necessity to balance proactive control with reactive feedback control, as both enable individuals to successfully manage their own motivation. "People motivate and guide their actions through proactive control by setting themselves challenging goals that create a state of disequilibrium" (Bandura, 1993, p. 132). In this state of disequilibrium, individuals typically create strategies and a plan that applies their capabilities and drive to achieve envisioned goals, motivating them to accept even higher challenges (Bandura, 1993). The cognitive behavior pattern complements the espoused values of the For the Bold campaign as this branded message suggested forward movement and high achievement. What remained unknown was how the campaign influenced the self-efficacy of the FGS and how different levels of self-efficacy influenced student decision-making regarding academic major and career formation.

First-generation College Students

All first-year students experience some form of adjustment when starting college; however, first-generation college students, in particular, enter unfamiliar environments when they join campus cultures as they do not have parents who attended college to help prepare them for new experiences. This transition creates initial levels of anxiety and a lost sense of belonging

for most individuals (Goodman et al., 2006). Moreover, first-generation college students typically manage their new surroundings from the disadvantaged positions of not knowing the academic culture, having limited access to academic and social backgrounds in collegiate settings, lower income status, and conflicting family support (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; McDonough, 2004). This case study acknowledged that first-generation college students, overall, represented a smaller percent of William & Mary's student body compared to the number of students who came from families in which at least one of their parents graduated from college. It also acknowledged that not all first-generation college students arrived at higher education institutions from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Comparatively, enrollment of first-generation college students at other higher education institutions in Virginia rank higher than at William & Mary. However, location and size of the institutions must be considered. James Madison University stated that the institution began collecting data on its first-generation college students in 2016 to gain insight on meeting academic needs of this specific group. The university reported that 540 sophomore students were enrolled at JMU, and 632 first-year students attending were considered first-generation students (Lewis, 2019). Virginia Commonwealth University (2019) also reported data on first-generation students, which showed that they represented 33% of its first-year class in the 2020-2021 academic year. In 2020, first-generation students from Virginia Tech's (2021b) entering class totaled 1,511, increasing from 16.4% in 2017 to 19.4% over 3 years. Moreover, Virginia Tech announced that by 2022, the university will build a student body that reflects students who are classified as first-generation, underrepresented, and/or low-income, making up 40% of the university's students enrolled (Virginia Tech, 2021a). Out of the 6,236 undergraduates who were

enrolled at William & Mary during the 2020-2021 academic year, the institution's first-generation sophomores represented 2.4% of the student population (William & Mary, 2020b).

Founding Research on First-generation College Students

This study built on seminal research of FGS. Frequently cited studies set the stage for additional research on students. Notably, research on first-generation students helped to better understand the group's personal experiences and motivational factors that influence their college choice and persistence (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Terenzini et al., 1996). Building on this historical research, my study expands work on FGS by investigating how branding campaigns, such as For the Bold, influenced students' choice of major and career trajectory.

The seminal work by Terenzini and colleagues (1996) produced findings related to first-generation students. Their study focused on first-generation students attending 18 four-year institutions and five 2-year universities and colleges. They noted,

> As colleges and universities have become increasingly accessible to women, people of color, and students of low-income families, the profile of the undergraduate student body has changed with respect to students' age, enrollment status, attitudes, family conditions, and physical and psychological health as well as gender and race/ethnicity. (Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 1)

Their findings suggested that during the early 1990s, first-generation students based their college choice decision-making on the combination of influences of their families' history of education, cultural values, demands, and support. Terenzini et al. (1996) claimed that because students did not have parents who graduated from college, they could not fall back on academic history as a reference, which may have caused them to begin college with less preparation and low

awareness of the academic commitment necessary to earn a degree. What remained unknown was how much these findings held true in 2020.

Inman and Mayes (1999) later focused on first-generation students at community colleges. They discovered that their participants experienced stronger levels of culture shock when entering college due to their limited knowledge of academic demands and altered social surroundings in college. This portrait of how first-generation students transition to college includes feelings of isolation and confusion as they move from family structures to academic environments on college campuses (Inman & Mayes, 1999; Terenzini et al., 1996). However, determining if this type of culture shock existed for the FGS attending a highly selective university like William & Mary required further exploration.

Current Research on First-generation College Students

Building on the seminal work of researchers like Terenzini et al. (1996) and Inman and Mayes (1999), other studies emerged from the early work on self-efficacy among first-generation college students. For example, Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) qualitative research investigated the motivating factors that inspire this group of students to attain a degree regardless of differing social and economic situations. Pointedly, by 2008, 50% of first-generation college students came from families that earned an annual income of less than $50,000 per year (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). A link between low-income status and first-generation student status underscores the difference in social capital these students bring to campus given their lack of background experiences with college and their lower levels of cultural capital.

Moreover, 16% of families from this lower-income group earned $20,000 or less. Minorities and individuals coming from low socio-economic environments manage hardships throughout their entire academic journey (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). As my study explored the

possible influence of William & Mary's institutional branding on the self-efficacy beliefs of its FGS, it acknowledged that not all FGS who attended William & Mary may match the financial profile described by previous researchers. However, they may have faced similar academic adjustments throughout their second-year experience.

The study conducted by Blackwell and Pinder (2014) used semi-structured interviews of first-generation and third-generation college students and depicted two opposing academic journeys. Their research suggested that "third-generation college students did not have to make the decision to attend college, it was made for them" (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014, p. 53). For the first-generation students, college was not automatically assumed. Using a grounded theory method, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) designed their study to document the steps taken by first-generation college students as they rise above their family academic backgrounds to gain acceptance into higher education.

Reporting on the perspectives and "lived realities" of the study participants, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) found that first-generation college students used both internal and external strategies to develop within college communities based on individual levels of self-efficacy beliefs. However, they also determined that there was not a generalized source of motivation and behavior for the student group. The participating first-generation students in the study credited their goal-setting capabilities as being internally motivated, which enabled them to complete their degrees. Also, the study highlighted how the support from family members and relatability from students in similar circumstances served as external motives throughout their college experiences. Beyond these support mechanisms, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) concluded that the promotion of teacher-student mentorship and additional peer support for first-generation college students would further help these students in their college journey.

The findings from Blackwell and Pinder (2014) align with Schlossberg's (2006) transition theory and the model that was designed to better understand and manage the factors involved when individuals experience significant transitions within their families, in the workplace, or, in this case, in an educational setting (Goodman et al., 2006). When applied, the transition model, which includes approaching a change, developing the means to move forward and then actually doing so by building on resources, may enable first-generation students to avoid the confusion that accompanies transitional periods and may encourage them to seek out guidance when needed. "When they are able to explore the issue more fully, understand the underlying meaning, and develop a plan, they are more likely to be able to cope effectively and resolve the problem" (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 31). Notably, each student may be dealing with a unique transition, based on background and capabilities, yet the model remains applicable (Goodman et al., 2006).

Similar in research attention, Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) focused on 12 first-generation college students from a southwest, regional institution as the students matriculated into an unfamiliar, academic environment. "For FGS, the give-and-take nature of their relationship struggles emerges from their desire to maintain cultural identity while navigating the college experience" (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011, p. 57). By narrowing in on the concept of relational dialectics theory, the research team investigated how the participants formed and maintained healthy relationships. Like Blackwell and Pinder (2014), Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) discovered internal and external tensions existing within the academic climate. However, their applied data was used to determine dialectic tensions experienced by first-generation students, which involved both intraindividual and intergroup descriptions: "The dialectic pull occurred as the students struggled to be proud of themselves and their roots versus the struggle to

learn and adapt to the collegiate culture" (p. 58). The first-generation participants frequently felt conflicted to either join traditional discourse communities on campus or to remain isolated in groups of other first-generation college students with similar backgrounds.

Labeling this intraindividual conflict as *In Versus Out*, Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) defined the phrase as an existing academic challenge experienced by first-generation students as the students hoped to become members of the college community while remaining separate from the campus environment. By applying a grounded theory method and dividing their findings into different dialectics, the researchers provided validity to the constructs of transitional challenges tied to first-generation college students and higher education (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). For example, continuing-generation students arrive to higher education settings with a general understanding of their future demands and academic possibilities, whereas first-generation college students frequently begin their journey with expectations that place them at a disadvantage in the classroom (Giancola et al., 2008).

Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) also highlighted the first-generation students' choice between *Integration Versus Segregation* when examining external, intergroup tensions. The participants in their study discussed their eagerness to interact with traditional students, yet, simultaneously they were also searching for acceptance as first-generation students of higher education. "As a group, FGS wanted to assimilate, but they expressed a need to protect themselves by segregating themselves—maintaining this marginal identity keeps them safe and linked to their familial identities" (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011, p. 62). First-generation study participants shared a sense of frustration when attempting to side with a self-sustaining identity or blending into a new culture of peers (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). Notably, the qualitative research collected and analyzed for my case study examined the possibility of similar frustrations

and struggles with self-identity shared by William & Mary's sophomores who were also FGS during the messaging of the For the Bold campaign and its historic fundraising achievement. Moreover, I documented factors linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, like additional frustration, anxiety, and isolation, and I considered how these factors played a role in their awareness and reaction to the campaign.

A Profile of Sophomore College Students

Gahagan and Hunter (2006) referred to the college sophomore as the middle child, similar to middle siblings who may become overlooked by parents as attention gets absorbed by their first and last children. "Less well understood is the experience of students in their second year: a different and, at times, even more challenging period than the initial transition to college" (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 17). Concerns over financial demands and questions tied to goals after graduation for sophomores serve as justification for educators to shift more resources from the first year to sophomore year. Expanding on this research, Webb and Cotton (2019) conducted a quantitative comparison study, which included two surveys completed by undergraduates. The focus centered on what is referred to as the "sophomore slump" under the lens of student perceptions of their academic demands and social integration among college students. Webb and Cotton's (2019) findings showed an increase in engagement among students during their second year, yet the research showed that the student participants failed to experience higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs regarding their academic performance. My case study on FGS at William & Mary was built on the commonalities with first-generation college students and based on previous research that highlights academic adjustments and expert analysis regarding the second-year experience.

Second-Year Challenges

The sophomore year represents a significant timeframe for the selection of academic majors and the formation of valuable engagement with educators of higher learning, all leading to retention and academic outcomes (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Therefore, my case study recognized that the messaging promoted in William & Mary's For the Bold campaign held the potential to influence its FGS during this transitional period. Gahagan and Hunter (2006) stressed that, "Choosing a major, questioning parents' values, and searching for meaning and closeness to other students become more important as first-year students become sophomores" (p. 18). They also described the *sophomore slump* as a year filled will emotions that stem partly from unfulfilling relationships with institutional figures and self-doubts regarding possible career options (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 18).

Foster's (2017) research sampled 437 college undergraduates from a large southeastern university between November 2011 and October 2012. Using the Five Factor model of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness, Foster (2017) provided a clearer understanding of why undergraduates select and then change their academic majors. Her findings contributed to my focus on the high and low levels of self-efficacy beliefs of FGS at William & Mary, considering that, in Foster's research, 27% out of the total sample of 437 undergraduate students represented sophomores.

According to Foster (2017), college sophomores positively associated extraversion with their decisions to change academic disciplines. The participants' responses were attributed to the popular belief that extraversion encourages social engagement. "Second year students are busier exploring their career options than either freshmen or more established upperclassmen and are necessarily more involved with activities that involve information seeking and self-exploration"

(Foster, 2017, p. 370). Moreover, through the design of three research questions and online questionnaires, Foster (2017) learned that narrow personality traits existing under the conceptual framework of the Five Factor model, specifically a sense of identity, optimism, and career decidedness, may reveal other determining influences on undergraduates' decision-making within higher education environments. Foster's (2017) Five Factor model serves a similar purpose as compared to this case study's adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC. My adapted model considers how FGS shape their identity and confidence levels while managing their academic environments on campus while selecting their academic majors under the For the Bold campaign messaging (Bandura, 1986).

Equally important to my case study, Foster (2017) noted that through the questionnaire responses of sophomore participants, her research presented a correlation between openness and change of academic discipline within the specific student group. "One could propose that Openness acts as a catalyst for change among students with broad interests, who are curious about many majors and careers; the correlation could indicate high and low levels of career exploration" (p. 372). If the Five Factor model and more narrow personality traits serve as indications of boldness and reflection of individual self-efficacy beliefs, the results from my case study research may provide credible evidence that the For the Bold campaign influenced self-efficacy, and, in turn, the academic outcomes of major selections for FGS (Foster, 2017).

Support for College Sophomores

University campaigns frequently occur as campus programs are in operation or being created, and campuses are increasingly building in support for the second-year experience to address the needs of this student population. Notably, just as the For the Bold campaign stressed expectations of academic growth, so too do second-year-experience programs (West, 2017).

"Leaders of these [sophomore] initiatives forge partnerships with other departments to curb spending and help students pick majors, choose the right study abroad program or connect with faculty through advising and social events" (West, 2017, p. 34). Researchers increasingly find evidence that points to the necessity for higher education institutions to work collectively to provide resources that allow sophomores to move forward within their undergraduate programs, including the efforts of two universities (Emory and Trinity) in the research conducted by West (2017).

Emory University. Based on the direction of Emory's Board of Trustees, the university initiated plans in 2002 to provide additional attention to its second-year students that would match efforts to support its incoming freshmen. Over time, Emory's administrative planners formed options that blanketed most sophomore environments, from residential life to honorary levels of academics. For example, the student group experienced a greater presence of academic community once Emory University, located in Atlanta, implemented the requirement that all sophomores must live on campus with a live-in academic advisor available for guidance as the group transitions from general requirement courses to selecting appropriate majors. Emory also launched a Sophomore Pinning Ceremony for its second-year students to recognize their academic commitment to the institution, which moves sophomores to an honorary alumni status. Considering that the university served more than 1200 second-year students in 2017, the range of support evolved into a significant effort, and each program continually received updates based on the needs of Emory's sophomores (West, 2017).

Trinity University. Located in San Antonio, Trinity University received an excellence award from NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education for its Sophomore College Program, which raised sophomore retention rates from 87% in 2005 to 90% in 2017. To

ease tensions within the second-year experience, program planners assigned sophomores with upperclassman residents who would then serve as academic mentors (West, 2017). “Through that support, they realize, for example, that concerns over choosing a major or transitioning into second year are common,” (West, 2017, p. 32). Trinity also strengthened the connection between sophomore students and faculty by hosting a three-night event titled “Major Meals.” The dinners provide faculty and Trinity alumni an opportunity to discuss the relatability of courses and specific majors to appropriate careers, directing their attention on sophomore students who may remain undecided on academic disciplines (West, 2017).

William & Mary. Reflecting For the Bold’s campaign philosophy, William & Mary reached out to its sophomore students by encouraging leadership through citizenship and community engagement. The institution’s Aim 4 program directs undergraduates toward building strong networks of support, collaborating with organizations on social concerns, attending conferences, and establishing a practice of lifelong learning. Sophomores, FGS included, have the opportunity to work and develop within small cohorts under the Aim 4 program, while they experience learning and engagement together as members of the William & Mary Tribe (Aim 4, 2020). Moreover, William & Mary’s Student Leadership Foundation supports the growth and interests of both freshmen and sophomore students (Leadership Programs, 2020). As the Foundation states, “We believe leadership is more than just a title or position, and we will explore the process of leadership and how our identities, values, and experiences shape our leadership journey” (Leadership Programs, 2020, para. 1). Sophomores can join the Student Leadership Foundation on a voluntary basis and receive guidance through specialized frameworks. Created by William & Mary’s Office of Student Leadership Development (2020), the frameworks provide guidance for student leaders who seek engagement

on campus. Notably, FGS may have been influenced by the Student Leadership Foundation's stated position that all students hold the capability of becoming leaders, especially as it aligned with the campaign message that William & Mary is For the Bold (Leadership Programs, 2020).

Academic Disciplines and Career Path Decisions

Aligning with the framework of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, this case study considered the possibility that FGS at William & Mary may have processed their academic and social experiences realistically yet created distorted assessments of their abilities based on how they cognitively selected, merged, and measured information due to the strategic branding of For the Bold. As well, the study also questioned if FGS received positive motivation from the institution's branded messaging, which leads to what Bandura (1986) describes as enhanced self-efficacy. This builds from determination and self-confidence when overcoming obstacles present in diverse environments, which includes higher education.

Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011), for example, recognized how existing levels of student confidence in academic planning can possibly signal the opportunity for growth within higher academic platforms. This finding supports William & Mary's message communicated through its record-breaking campaign and the drive for a combination of fundraising and academic vision. Considering that individuals hold the ability to apply, discard, and repurpose their patterns of behavior, which are commonly tied to unconscious internal motivators, Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011) noted that "self-efficacy beliefs could be used as a predictor of change in academic planning behavior" (p. 5). However, individuals can misjudge their own perceptions of self-efficacy when relying on knowledge gained from past experiences or from their recollection of past events, producing a domino effect of failed attempts and undesired outcomes (Bandura,

1986). What remained unknown was how the self-efficacy of the FGS in this study was influenced by the external environment created by the campaign.

Academic Goals and Outcomes

As college students decidedly narrow their focus to certain subjects and academic disciplines, their success in those fields typically increases, and this progression may lead to shifts in professional and personal exploration (Johnson & Muse, 2017). My case study acknowledged that "rarely do students understand, with confidence, specifically how to strategically reach their long-term educational goals or how to translate their distal goals into proximal goals through academic planning" (Johnson & Muse, 2017, p. 7). Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011), using Bandura's (1993) social cognitive theory, recognized that student actions, performances, and outcomes may be fueled by the motivation stemming from both self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, which runs parallel to the overall mission of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.

Moreover, Johnson and Muse (2017) explored why women remain underrepresented in some academic tracks. They focused on the effects of high school curriculum, the history of individual academic progress, extra-curricular engagement, socio-economic status, and the perceived self-efficacy for academic success. The researchers investigated how these factors contributed to students' decisions as they selected academic tracks. They discovered that male first-generation students showed a higher probability of selecting fields that best suited their abilities compared to women. Thus, it is important to study the academic experiences of both male and female students at William & Mary to determine if the campaign and gender had any influence on the academic choices made by the FGS.

The Formation of Professional Goals

Once students of higher education develop their academic plans, they also form outcome expectations leading toward graduation and, for some, to the formation of ideal career options that offer high salaries and personal gratification (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Murphy and Collins (2015) focused on millennial college students and their concepts of attractive professional environments. Describing common job attributes as possessing required job skills, holding related workplace experiences, making professional contributions, and producing quality outcomes, the researchers warned, "Millennials' abundant self-confidence can sometimes slip into a sense of entitlement, which does not allow them to realistically assess their abilities relative to the performance demands of the job or organization" (Murphy & Collins, 2015, p. 200). My case study attempted to determine if the outcome expectations of the FGS participants at William & Mary aligned with the general research on the academic choices of college students.

Yet, Murphy and Collins (2015) also acknowledged how the group, referred to as Gen Y, generally developed under parental structures of positive reinforcement and, as a result, gained high levels of self-confidence. The researchers recognized that Gen Y graduates tend to transition from higher education to chosen careers with general expectations of challenging opportunities, flexibility in the workplace, and rapid progression without the traditional price of paying dues before promotion (Murphy & Collins, 2015). Notably, the definition of Generation Y students differentiates from Generation X based on date of birth and social behaviors. For example, those born following the Baby Boomer generation, between the 1960s and late 70s, are labeled as Generation X and have been described as a disaffected group that avoids traditional structure. Born in the 1980s and 90s, Generation Y carries the reputation of entitlement and

places greater value in completing a college degree (Krahn & Galambos, 2014). How FGS aligned with this profile of Gen Y students and how they responded to William & Mary's For the Bold campaign message under this description were explored in the study.

Moreover, my case study sought evidence from participants of deliberate shifts in the formation of their career paths, specifically career goals that FGS may have originally considered out of reach, yet they changed based on the influences on self-efficacy beliefs bolstered by the promotion of For the Bold messaging. Placing Bandura's (1993) social cognitive theory within the context of higher education, the means necessary to strengthen self-efficacy beliefs and to accomplish individual goals rely on the willingness to explore unfamiliar grounds. By doing so, William & Mary's FGS may have grown more confident to advance by trial and error (Bandura, 1993).

A Century of Female Students

In 2016, William & Mary stated how the new climate for higher education called for a united effort from all groups connected to the institution (University Advancement Staff, 2019). For example, 24 women entered William & Mary's community in 1918. One hundred years later, in 2018, women totaled nearly 53% of William & Mary's alumni population and represented a significant group to University Advancement and the For the Bold campaign (William & Mary, 2018b). A focus on celebrating 100 years of women on campus occurred in the academic year 2018-2019. Women's Initiatives, as listed on the campaign webpage, promoted its purpose and contribution to the For the Bold mission.

> The goal of women's initiatives at William & Mary is to support the interests, standing and well-being of all W&M women and to continue to foster a climate of inclusiveness

> that will propel our special brand of bold to impact W&M and the world. (Women's Initiatives, 2018, para. 2)

By the Fall 2018 academic semester, over 100 women with connections to William & Mary's community donated an overall amount of more than $1 million to the newly created Alumnae Initiatives Endowment, which serves as an example of influence and academic position within higher education (William & Mary, 2018b). The celebration of women at William & Mary used a specific graphic and logo designed for the celebration of 100 years of women on campus (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Graphic Recognizing Female Students Enrolled at William & Mary

Note. This graphic was distributed during the 2018-2019 academic year to recognize the achievements of William & Mary women from 1918 to 2018. Permission granted by William & Mary's University Marketing.

The attention directed toward a century of coeducation of women at William & Mary overlapped with the experiences of the FGS in 2020, notably female sophomores, which prompted this case study to consider the 100 Years recognition as it positioned messaging under the For the Bold Campaign goals and institutional branding. Specifically, my study explored how the campaign

messaging and the recognition of women may have influenced the choice of majors and careers made by William & Mary's FGS.

Marketing Knowledge

As this case study explored the institutional branding at William & Mary, it considered specific approaches to marketing a message. Notably, colleges and universities have progressed into an unfamiliar business-driven paradigm in which students have become categorized as consumers (Tolbert, 2014). Additionally, existing hesitations and incentives of exploring new methods to reaching potential students and changing academic populations have shifted to higher prioritized levels, and as revenue and reputation represent factors of motivation, marketing perspectives from decades ago now become increasingly appealing. Even before 1980, the willingness of institutions existed to regularly practice marketing strategies through alumni recruitment and student enrollment, along with the steps taken by colleges and universities to fully implement branding methods through the modeled structure of marketing and marketing research to strengthen academic identity (Tolbert, 2014). Higher education institutions now focus on the demands from the external market, in addition to mission statements and academic resources, to establish an appropriate position within the current marketplace (Tolbert, 2014). What remained unknown in my case study was how this form of branding, as implemented through the fundraising campaign For the Bold, influenced the FGS at William & Mary.

Sustaining the Institutional Brand

As colleges and universities design creative campaigns to brand their academic advantages, the traditional culture and ideals of institutions may clash within the capitalist marketplace in which they have joined (Watson, 2011). Moreover, the campus resources necessary for effective teaching and learning matched with available recreational outlets for

social development simply represent average expectancies of currently enrolled students as compared to academic environments from prior decades (Newman et al., 2004). Consequently, institutions of higher education have answered competitive threats "by offering amenities seemingly far removed from the traditional college experience, such as elaborate fitness centers, luxurious student unions, and other costly adaptations designed to make the life of a student easier and more attractive" (Newman et al., 2004, p. 13). Considering the financial commitment of successful branding used to overcome competitive challenges, state institutions weigh the costs of distancing from state funding and the heavier responsibility attached to deregulation (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008). Branding comes at a cost and with choices.

A Bolder Strategy: The Rebranding of Institutional Heritage

Altering the reputations of institutions proves challenging as students and stakeholders customarily connect academic quality to heritage. Moreover, colleges and universities established during or prior to the 17th century frequently rely on their historical foundation as a gateway to automatic branding success, which discourages the implementation of other aggressive forms of academic promotion. Yet, marketers on a global scale encourage efforts to promote a corporate identity at ancient institutions as a source of sustainability. While transferable, the heritage of academic institutions remains in constant development and creation (Bulotaite, 2003).

European Identity. Claims that institutions represent a form of living heritage prove correct based on strong, numerical evidence: 66 European universities have remained operational since the Reformation and have avoided any periods of academic interruption as they entered this millennium (Bulotaite, 2003). Bulotaite's (2003) research on the historic identity of European institutions supported the belief that academic leaders should place faith in students entering

higher education for the first time based on the perspective that students will hold greater appreciation of a university through greater awareness of its heritage.

The "Europe—A Common Heritage" campaign, launched in 1999, was headed by the Council of Europe and centered on the debate surrounding the protection of academic history within higher education as older institutions compete with the movement of modern universities to mirror the traditions from centuries past. Bulotaite (2003) described the academic points of interest as consistently gravitating to the benefit of attracting prospective students through the branding of institutional heritage. Moreover, his investigation explored how the University of Vilnius approached the promotion of identity by strategically branding its heritage during the early 2000s when the needs of historic and modern European institutions began to merge.

Founded in 1579, the University of Vilnius is recognized as the oldest institution in Lithuania. However, the institution was forced to consider positioning its heritage as a branding tool once the growth of public and private institutions disturbed the privileged environment of little-to-no competition (Bulotaite, 2003). Bulotaite (2003) acknowledged actions taken by the university's Office of Information and Public Relations to measure the importance of institutional heritage by approaching its student body. After questioning students on the historic identity at the University of Vilnius, feedback supported this heritage and the promotion of its reputation through ceremonial commencement attire and name-centered regalia. As a result, the institution that began educating 200 students in the 16th century recognized the responsibility of serving more than 19,000 students as of 2002 and agreed to consider a branding compromise situated between ancient and modern ideology. Understanding that branding influenced students' choice in a college, it remains unknown how branding continues to influence student choice of major and career pathways.

Control Over Academic Funding. Newman et al.'s (2004) research of new marketing approaches within the higher education sector described a forced reliability on market trends rather than on government regulations. The formation of statewide governing boards in the U.S., established to manage the rapidly-growing number of state institutions during the 1950s and '60s, represented a structured path for program development and financial planning. The boards aimed to provide state colleges and universities with unique identities by preventing the overlap of academic program curriculum and buffering higher education from the pressures of state politics. However, over time, lawmakers became frustrated with the governing boards' inability to control the cost of higher education or to improve the quality of education at institutions. Consequently, rather than depending on the oversight and regulation of board members, higher education universities and colleges would lean on the market to realize public needs and demands (Newman et al., 2004). Simply put, attracting more students through branding and marketing efforts helps increase tuition revenue.

Leaders of public and private nonprofit institutions face intense competition from sources that were absent during the birth of state governing boards and the National Governors Association. By 2000, for-profit institutions and online programs presented threats powerful enough to consider the move to decentralization with one clear goal in sight: autonomy. Those in favor of this transition supported proposals geared toward cutting the oversight of governing boards in exchange for individual institutional accountability (Newman et al., 2004), while other public institutions found themselves caught in the middle with little choice but to support a restructuring of academic leadership (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008).

Funding of Virginia Higher Education Institutions. Closer to William & Mary's campus, Virginia lawmakers showed reluctance to approve changes within higher education as

the commonwealth considered releasing some academic control following a 2004 proposal from William & Mary, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Tech (Hebel, 2018).

> The ultimate reality for publicly supported colleges and universities is that they serve their states. The ultimate reality for state government is that they have to make explicit what they expect and how much they will pay to get it. (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008, p. 322)

Yet, the universities called for the creation of a state-assisted charter institution based on claims of inadequate state funding over several years, requesting flexible state management in exchange for limitations on new state funding.

Leslie and Berdahl's (2008) research described how the actions taken by William & Mary, Virginia Tech, and the University of Virginia were expected to persuade other institutions to support a more market-driven system of operations. However, as the researchers suggested, the collaborated effort exhibited by Virginia's three elite institutions encountered a "misestimation error" (p. 311) as it challenged a state's political system unprepared for extreme transitions to its governing practices. The concept of procedural deregulation, offering greater chances for investment and institutional control of daily agendas, may not have matched the vision of all of Virginia's public institutions (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008), yet it created context that helped set the stage to launch the $1 billion For the Bold campaign at William & Mary.

William & Mary's For the Bold Campaign

Notably, William & Mary implemented its historic campaign during a time when higher education institutions managed a steady decline of taxpayer support. In 2015, the institution reported that less than 13% of its operating budget was received from state dollars. This placed greater emphasis on fundraising as a means of financial support (Advancement Staff, 2019). As evidence of successful academic marketing and motivation, William & Mary promoted the

donations of a then record-breaking total of $105.8 million raised during the 2016 fiscal year, with $68 million in scholarship funds (University Advancement Staff, 2019). Following For the Bold's conclusion, the campaign chair summarized (as cited by Wall, 2020, para. 4), "Through times of triumph and tribulations, the campaign has provided a stream of resources that have enabled the great minds who come to William & Mary to innovate, seize new opportunities and pursue their passions" as the university surpassed its fundraising goal, raising $1.04 billion by July 2020.

Recognizing the significance of prioritizing William & Mary's heritage, For the Bold's campaign chairperson stressed, "Our shared sense of purpose has been the driving force for good over the span of our campaign and will continue to be the common thread that binds us long after the conclusion of *For the Bold*" (Gerdelman, 2021, para. 3). However, the campaign's message needed to navigate between centuries of academic history and a student body that exists among a campus culture of tradition and prestige. Established in 1693, William & Mary is the nation's second oldest university and faces similar challenges as those in Europe as its heritage remains as prominent as the Sir Christopher Wren Building that has welcomed students and faculty for more than 3 centuries.

This elite university officially opened its doors 67 years after Harvard and has continually laid claim to several *first* and *only* facts recognized throughout its scholarly history. Due to its reputation for providing high quality pedagogical instruction at lower costs than most traditional American Ivy League institutions, William & Mary holds the title of *Public Ivy* (William & Mary, 2018a). The university takes credit for creating the first honor system for higher learning in 1779, for offering a full faculty to potential students in 1729, for founding Phi Beta Kappa,

America's first intercollegiate fraternity, in 1776, and for receiving the first and only coat of arms from the College of Heralds in 1694.

Arguably, branding can be traced back to the institution's start once the Crown under the Seal of the Privy Council presented William & Mary with its charter and its historic namesake (William & Mary, 2018a). In May 2019, London's Kensington Palace displayed the institution's signature colors of green and gold to represent William & Mary's international community of nearly 9000 parents, friends, and alumni during a For the Bold event held within the city of its "royal roots" (as cited by Speed, 2019, para. 4), as stated by William & Mary President Katherine Rowe. Nonetheless, this case study acknowledged that elite 4-year universities founded centuries ago must meet the interests of current campus communities as well as stakeholders and other groups off campus grounds (Loving & Cramerding, 2016). Consequently, the strategic approach implemented through the For the Bold campaign may have shaped the academic experiences of William & Mary's FGS.

Summary

As traditional American universities and colleges manage heightened competition from the pressures of prestige and market demands, adopting a branding approach long practiced by businesses offers the leverage necessary to remain significant contributors in the field of higher education (Newman et al., 2004). To bridge William & Mary's strategic branding of For the Bold and the learning environments of FGS attending the institution, this case study used Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and model of triadic reciprocal causation as a tool to determine how the institution's campaign influenced the students as they formulated key decisions within the boundaries of their campus environment (Gofen, 2009; William & Mary, 2020a). Notably, the institution's For the Bold campaign simultaneously maximized its potential

as FGS at William & Mary were expected to select their academic disciplines and begin their initial plans for professional transitions.

Additionally, I used Bandura's (1986) model of TRC to emphasize the impact of institutional branding as universities and colleges attempt to differentiate themselves from their competition in the field (Newman et al., 2004). "When environmental conditions exercise powerful constraints on behavior, they emerge as the overriding determinants" (Bandura, 1986, p. 24). What remained unknown was how much the external fundraising campaign served as an influence on FGS. My case study's data collection and analysis considered how well the self-efficacy beliefs of this student group and the branded message of the For the Bold campaign aligned throughout the second-year experience. This alignment could allow for the projected intent of William & Mary's For the Bold vision to become a driving force of FGS' motivation to succeed academically. The study's findings indicate how this motivation, in turn, may have resulted in the selection of desired academic majors by FGS and the recognition that their college degrees will lead to higher salaries, better physical and mental health, and awareness of civic contribution (Newman et al., 2004), which reflects the message distributed through the For the Bold campaign.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

William & Mary's first-generation sophomores (FGS) and the funding goals of For the Bold's $1 billion campaign existed within the same institutional environment, building a context in which the students developed their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986). Notably, second-year students frequently enroll in courses that complement their choice of disciplinary major (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Additionally, undergraduates tend to select majors during their sophomore year and seek to select majors that align with their values, skills, attitudes, and talents (Johnson & Muse, 2017). Understanding the influence of the campaign on FGS during the academic timing of their degree selection and initial thoughts on career formation was at the heart of this research.

By design, this case study offered a contextual understanding to readers, allowing for interpretation of the findings based on individual environments and experiences as the study explored how or if FGS at William & Mary were influenced by the For the Bold message during their selection of academic majors and professional pursuits (Merriam, 1998). However, when planning the approach of this case study and forming expectations of possible outcomes, it was impossible to consider how the powerful influence of the COVID-19 pandemic would shift all aspects of academics for William & Mary FGS, from classroom settings and scholarly resources to social activity and student wellness. The adjustments made to follow U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and William & Mary policy were considered as data were collected and analyzed data for the study.

William & Mary's FGS who arrived at the institution between the academic years of 2015 and 2020 were exposed to the campaign's branded message, which may have encouraged them to set high expectations for themselves. During the last year of the campaign, FGS participants in this study were freshman. For the Bold may have influenced FGS as William & Mary communicated unique language and concepts of audience appeal to deliver its message (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014). Notably, the self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS may have produced accurate levels of confidence and trust in one's ability to overcome challenges, leading to greater persistence and achievement. Alternatively, the messaging of the campaign may have prompted FGS to doubt their abilities and confidence levels (Bandura, 1989). "Through such inefficacious thought they distress themselves and constrain and impair their level of functioning" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1177). Thus, these negative beliefs may have produced self-doubt, anxiety, and stress, creating heightened instability and frustration (Bandura, 1986). The questions driving this study sought to better understand the student experience in the context of the campaign.

Research Questions

William & Mary's FGS may have accepted the institution's For the Bold message as being delivered from authority and, therefore, logically interpreted the message as fact. For example, FGS may have reasonably assumed that since the William & Mary community is For the Bold and FGS are members of the William & Mary community, they must also be bold (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2017). However, "It can be dangerous to rely uncritically and solely on one's experiences when trying to determine the truth of some matter" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2017, p. 6). This study searched for evidence of significant relationships between academic

branding and student experiences among FGS at William & Mary. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores?
    a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major?
    b. Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?
2. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals?
    a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals?
    b. Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?

Approach to Methodology

A case study was selected as the best method for this research as the approach allowed me to explore the individual experiences of FGS at William & Mary during a specific timeframe within the implementation and messaging of the institution's campaign and the self-efficacy development of the FGS. It applied a thematic approach to collect responses through an online survey, allowing for the evaluation of self-efficacy levels and scholarly practices of FGS as related to the institutional branding of For the Bold (Merriam, 1998). Notably, the study also applied a narrative-style analysis as it relied on the perspectives and opinions from specific participants through individual virtual interviews, which centered on the participants' selection of academic major and the areas of their intended careers following graduation (Spickard, 2017). Case studies are bounded to include a focus on a particular population or case (Merriam, 1998).

Here, William & Mary served as the case site, and the FGS represented groups categorized by one group, by gender, and by singular case.

By applying a qualitative research approach in the structure of a single case study, I searched for a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign and the possible influence on the self-efficacy beliefs of its FGS as data emerged (Merriam, 1998). Each FGS participant who was interviewed offered his or her own perspective on William & Mary's For the Bold campaign in connection to the participant's individual ability and confidence. The participants provided information on what contributed to their decision-making for their major and career choice. Of note,

> Case studies are susceptible to bias, they lack control over extraneous variables, and their results may not generalize easily, but they can be useful in generating new research ideas, they can help falsify weak theories, and sometimes they are the only way to document an extraordinary person or event. (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2017, p. 372)

This chapter also outlines how bias was addressed and how quality was supported during data collection and analysis.

Critically, the attention of qualitative research centers on the participants' point of view and remained paramount to their experiences and responses to those experiences (Merriam, 1998). I followed two suggestions made by Merriam (1998), referring specifically to the collected data and the acknowledgement of the researcher's biases. First, "It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Thus, I searched for connectivity based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and research on self-efficacy beliefs through the implementation and continued messaging of the For the Bold campaign, through online survey

responses, and from five main interview questions. Second, to address bias stemming from the case study's focus, as the sole researcher, I have included a Statement of Researcher's Awareness of Possible Bias (see Appendix A).

When developing a strategic plan to conduct research, I considered the option of conducting a comparative study of two institutions and investigating their approaches to institutional branding. However, Astin (1970) shared the weaknesses of weighing one college against another, stating, "While such studies may prove interesting to the persons immediately concerned with the institutions being compared, the crudeness of this environmental measurement greatly limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the two institutions" (p. 148). Decidedly, I developed a single case study that offered descriptive insight on how FGS may have perceived William & Mary's campaign to allow for greater depth of analysis and utility for institutional leaders. Others may gain insight into their own situation as a result, but the findings are not meant to be generalizable (Astin, 1970).

Notably, I requested FGS to participate in 2020 to gather any evidence of altered self-efficacy beliefs during their second-year experience and the timeframe for promotion of the For the Bold campaign, particularly as the college sophomore class position within higher education is one filled with realizations and reflection (West, 2017). "Selecting a major is considered one of the most challenging parts of sophomore year" (West, 2017, p. 32). Yet, the support received as first-year students in the form of transitional programs and student retention fall short as undergraduates move forward to what many refer to as the sophomore slump (West, 2017). Thus, the focus on FGS at William & Mary helped expand understanding of the ways in which self-efficacy may have influenced their selection of a major and academic advancement during this critical time (Bandura, 1989).

Data Sources and Collection

To begin my data collection, I targeted the total population of FGS attending William & Mary during the Fall 2020 semester (n = 149) who may have received the messaging from the For the Bold campaign, followed by the request of FGS to continue participating in the case study. This process enabled me to examine the campus culture during the For the Bold campaign's implementation and completion through their perspective. Additionally, the smaller FGS group who agreed to participate in Phase 2 allowed me to identify the possible influence of the campaign's message by focusing on their self-efficacy beliefs, while revealing any relationship between the messaging and the selection of majors and formation of career goals (Merriam, 1998).

Data collection occurred in two phases. Phase 1 included an online survey that was distributed via email to all FGS enrolled during the fall of 2020. Next, individual virtual interviews were conducted with the smaller group of 12 FGS, representing Phase 2. As noted, the total population of 149 FGS (see Table 1) attending William & Mary was targeted in anticipation of gaining insight to self-efficacy beliefs and confidence levels from students at William & Mary. Out of the total population of FGS, 42 chose to participate in the online survey, and 12 of those participants progressed to participate in the individual interviews. Both groups provided "subtle and multifaceted" (Spickard, 2017, p. 60) data, and the smallest group of 12 participants offered depth and direction in this case study as they revealed the motivation and influence driving their selection of major and career choice within the context of the final year of the For the Bold campaign.

Online Survey

The first portion of data collection, the online survey, was designed to gather information on the self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS (see Appendix B). After I received IRB approval, I requested the list of all FGS enrolled during the fall of 2020 from the university registrar. Notably, the administration of the survey occurred during a unique time on campus. As the COVID-19 pandemic became a larger threat to campus communities in March of 2020, William & Mary made adjustments to teaching and learning and shifted to remote coursework following the institution's spring break. During the Fall 2020 semester, William & Mary approached the instruction of classes and the opportunity for academic and social activity through a combination of remote and in-person learning.

The design of the online survey (through Qualtrics) began in August of 2020 and was distributed to the 149 FGS through their email addresses in early October of 2020. An invitation to participate and an explanation of purpose to my case study was sent to all FGS, with a total of 42 students responding to the online survey (a response rate of 28%). Responses were anonymous and were not linked to student name or identification number. The survey included questions to assure that the students identified as first-generation. Additionally, the participants were asked to identify their specific academic school on campus where they will pursue their possible or selected academic major (Merriam, 1998).

Elements of a motivational engagement test instrument used to measure the self-efficacy beliefs of the FGS participants began the survey (see Appendix B, Appendix C). These questions were drawn from research conducted by Wu and Fan (2017), who studied the relationship between student behavior, student achievement, and procrastination. This motivational instrument offered eight test prompts, and seven of the prompts were included in the survey. For

example, Wu and Fan (2017) included the statement “I put more effort into schoolwork than I do in my other activities” in their test instrument. These questions provided an opportunity to assess the confidence of the FGS and their perceptions of their own capability to overcome the academic challenges faced during their second-year experience.

Additionally, the survey included items to assess the self-efficacy beliefs of the participants by using prompts from two of the three test scales originally applied by Holland et al. (1980). I highlighted points of identity and possible barriers existing between high school graduation and the steady progression through higher education, specifically barriers connected to the cultural backgrounds and financial limitations of first-generation college students. Collectively, the survey sought to explore the determination and variation of effort, persistence, identity, and limitations managed by the FGS (Holland et al., 1980).

The survey instrument also provided a means for FGS participants to volunteer for individual interviews to probe deeper into the influence of For the Bold’s message and key decision-making during their sophomore year. Additionally, the online survey responses allowed for useful coding prior to launching my individual virtual interviews with 12 FGS later in the Fall 2020 semester (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2017). An incentive was offered to maximize the study’s online survey responses from participating FGS by including each participant’s student email address in a lottery to win a monetary gift card worth $50.

Interviews of FGS

A case study relies on “the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding” (Merriam, 1998, p. 83) of the situation under examination rather than the number of participants sampled for data collection. Notably, the participation of the 12 FGS designated for individual interviews began with the population of 149 FGS on campus, including

66 men (44%) and 83 women (56%; see Table 1). The 42 online survey responders from the population of 149 FGS were prompted to indicate their willingness to participate in the second stage of the case study's data collection, which included individual virtual interviews. Out of the students who participated in the online survey (14 men, 33%, and 28 women, 67%), 30 FGS, including eight men (27%) and 22 women (73%), responded to the prompt by providing their email addresses for future contact.

Table 1

First-generation Sophomores Attending William & Mary in the Fall 2020 Semester and Case Study Participants

First-generation Sophomores at William & Mary (Fall 2020)	Gender	
	Men	**Women**
Total 149 Enrolled	66	83
	44%	56%
42 Survey Participants	14	28
	33%	67%
30 Volunteers - Phase 2	8	22
	27%	73%
12 Interview Participants	3	9
	25%	75%

Note. Table 1 provides evidence of the overrepresentation of female first-generation sophomores who were available to contact for case study participation and the overrepresentation of females who participated.

Evident in the data findings was the overrepresentation of women throughout the case study, as evidenced in the breakdown of data by gender in Table 1. Moreover, the study recognized a non-response bias in FGS men as shown in the participation data of the online survey, in the data of those volunteering for participation in Phase 2, and in the data of the 12 FGS who held individual interviews. However, why the non-response bias occurred in FGS

males at William & Mary and in this case study remains unknown. To prepare for Phase 2 of the case study, I requested a subset of volunteers based on the following criteria:

1. The indicated self-efficacy beliefs of all 30 FGS were reviewed, and the survey results offered diverse levels for both male and female FGS from Phase 1 (see Table 2 for specific details on self-efficacy belief levels). All 30 student volunteers were emailed individually to encourage between 12 to 15 FGS to volunteer as participants in Phase 2 of the case study.
2. Out of the 30 online survey responders emailed, three male and nine female FGS participants agreed to move ahead with follow-up interviews conducted in the second stage of the research.

Table 2

Self-Efficacy Belief Levels of All Online Survey Respondents and Gender

First-generation Sophomores	**Self-Efficacy Belief Level**							
	High		Middle		Low		Varied	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
42	21%	21%	64%	32%	0%	4%	14%	43%
	n = 3	n = 6	n = 9	n = 9	n = 0	n = 1	n = 2	n = 12
30	25%	18%	23%	27%	0%	5%	13%	50%
	n = 2	n = 4	n = 5	n = 6	n = 0	n = 1	n = 1	n = 11
12	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	11%	33%	56%
	n = 1	n = 3	n = 1	n = 0	n = 0	n = 1	n = 1	n = 5

Note. Table 2 provides self-efficacy belief levels taken from all online survey participants (Total-42, Volunteers-30, and Interviewed-12) and is categorized from largest (42 FGS) to smallest (12 FGS) groups of first-generation sophomores and by gender.

Prior to holding the individual virtual interviews, my original intention was to conduct a virtual pilot interview session on a selected group of students in Spring 2020 to determine if any revision and direction of the interview questions was necessary (Merriam, 1998). Here, I intended to invite a small number of FGS from another class year. Yet, based on the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the initial chaos and uncertainty generated by the

sudden closure of the campus, this endeavor became more difficult than originally envisioned. Campus personnel were focused on the move to remote learning, students were in a state of sudden change in moving out of on-campus housing, and I was personally impacted in my own work and family changes. Thus, I decided not to pursue the pilot interview session and relied instead on the input from my committee on the interview protocol and the fact that the protocol was grounded in the literature.

The interview protocol included questions on elements that contributed to the FGS' decisions regarding their major and future career aspirations. Next, I asked participants about their awareness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. The rationale for this line of inquiry was that "brands will be more valuable if they are offered as cultural resources and useful ingredients to produce the 'self' one chooses" (Chapleo, 2015, p. 151). In particular, I was interested in how the participants perceived the fundraising campaign of For the Bold in their personal choice for major and career plans. To maximize the number of FGS willing to participate in the interviews, I provided incentives to each interviewee by offering $25 gift cards, which I pre-purchased from the William & Mary Bookstore located near the campus.

Five open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were designed (see Appendix D) to maximize the ability to gather significant information through a more conversational setting (Merriam, 1998). "The extent to which a researcher has certain personality characteristics and skills necessary for this type of research needs to be assessed, just as a rating scale or survey form would be assessed in other types of research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). Despite the limitations presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented any in-person interviews, I exercised a sense of tolerance, sensitivity, empathy, and clarity while conducting virtual interviews with the selected FGS participants via Zoom to collect data that related to their

cultural backgrounds, personal behavior, and decision-making under the implementation and continued messaging of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign (Merriam, 1998).

The individual open-ended interviews occurred from November 2, 2020, to December 5, 2020. Notably, due to the campus response to the pandemic, the fall semester had a condensed schedule with finals ending on November 18th, which may have affected self-selection to participate and the personal frame of mind of the participants. I required each participant to sign a consent form (see Appendix E) prior to holding the interviews, and the consent form provided a detailed explanation of the expectations of the researcher and the rights of each FGS.

I was unable to view individual self-efficacy as it developed, nor could I witness the decision-making process of my FGS participants as they selected majors and formed career paths. Therefore, the use of virtual interviews as a primary method provided critical data to answer this case study's two main research questions (see Appendix F). I used open-ended questions based on Merriam's (1998) suggestion that, "Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways" (p. 74). However, I provided structure in areas in which I sought specific details regarding FGS' acknowledgement of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign as they reached the pivotal stage of weighing their capabilities against their academic possibilities (Merriam, 1998).

Document Review

Successful institutional branding and its influence on William & Mary's FGS may not have been instantaneous or observable, and the FGS participating in the study may not have been fully aware of influence attached to the For the Bold campaign. However, accessible documentation to collect reports of acts, behaviors, or events represent second-order phenomena that can provide historical data for evaluators to compare two or more points on a timeline for

evidence of change. Therefore, I also relied on digital documentation of speeches, media-covered events, and detailed explanations of what the campaign offered to the William & Mary community. This documentation was made available through the institution's website and was used for measurement of branding performance and to search for evidence of trends in academic major selection and career interests by the university's FGS (Spickard, 2017). It remains unknown if any of the participants read or accessed this online information.

Data Analysis

My qualitative approach to determining the influence of the For the Bold campaign messaging on William & Mary's FGS, based on the measurement of their self-efficacy beliefs, justified the representation of the student group as my unit of observation (Spickard, 2017). I acknowledged that, "a measure of the environment of the total institution may be a poor reflection of the environment actually encountered by individual students" (Astin, 1970, p. 442). Yet, all FGS participants offered helpful data related to the issues in question as this study investigated the influence of the campaign's implementation on the specific student group. Table 3 outlines the connections between data collection and data analysis.

Table 3

Strategic Approach to Data Analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
R1		
• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores? • How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major? • Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?	Online Survey Open-ended Interviews Public Documents	• Qualitative • Respondent-Centered • Unit of Observation: First-generation Sophomores • Unit of Analysis: First-generation sophomores at William & Mary • Coding and Categorization
R2		
• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals? • How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals? • Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?	Online Survey Open-ended Interviews Public Documents	• Qualitative • Respondent-Centered • Unit of Observation: First-generation Sophomores • Unit of Analysis: First-generation sophomores at William & Mary • Coding and Categorization

Note. Table 3 includes the study's research questions, data collection, and data analysis.

Coding of Data

I recognized the importance of selecting a respondent-centered analysis of my FGS participants and their perceptions of their own capabilities and confidence throughout the process of collecting and analyzing evidence of influence due to William & Mary's For the Bold campaign (Spickard, 2017). Therefore, to further develop the findings related to my research questions, I applied a coding scheme to this case study's analysis of data collected on the institution's FGS and possible influence on their self-efficacy beliefs. As Merriam (1998) described, "Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data," (p. 164). By coding the collected data, it allowed for a more precise analysis that centered on William & Mary's FGS, specifically the 12 FGS who also offered individual interviews and their beliefs of achievable or problematic goals under the For the Bold message (Spickard, 2017).

I relied on the online survey results of all 42 FGS who participated and the coding of their self-efficacy beliefs to prepare for the individual interviews of the smaller group of 12 participants. To code the levels of self-efficacy beliefs of each survey participant, I considered their Likert-scaled responses to each prompt, which offered choices ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. If a FGS strongly agreed or agreed when responding to at least eight (57%) prompts (indicating a positive situation or outcome) and his/her remaining six prompted responses reflected at least average indicators of ability and confidence, I coded the student as holding high self-efficacy beliefs. I used the same approach when a FGS responded to at least eight prompts (indicating a challenging or negative outcome) to code a student with low self-efficacy beliefs. If a student offered varied responses, ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*, when answering all 14 prompts, I coded the student as holding a varied sense of self-

efficacy beliefs. Lastly, when the responses of a FGS remained within the options of *Somewhat Agree* to *Somewhat Disagree*, I coded the student as holding middle-ranged self-efficacy beliefs. Notably, I chose to apply the Likert-scale measurement in my coding of self-efficacy belief levels, which was similar to Wu and Fan (2017) and Holland et al.'s (1980) original measurements used as they administered their original tests and prompts.

Categorization of Data

Once I gathered and analyzed the survey responses from the 42 FGS, I then followed a strategy of theoretical deduction to analyze the responses from the virtual interviews with 12 of the 42 FGS. I constructed three data categories as levels of analysis to move forward into Phase 2 of the case study. These categories were based on the factors of self-efficacy of the 12 FGS, awareness of William & Mary's campaign, and any decisive influence stemming from the campaign as FGS enrolled at the elite institution determined their majors and formed career paths. This approach aligned with my adaptation of Bandura's TRC model (see Figure 4 in Chapter 2, p. 28) and provided a manageable analysis of the data collected from each FGS. I formed the three categories for this case study prior to holding the 12 interviews, and I identified factors of significance as the participants identified into single units. I then placed the data collected from the 12 virtual interviews into one of the three defined categories (Merriam, 1998). By breaking down the responses of the participants into single units to the point where the data becomes independent from all other information, I could develop themes that link one unit to another. This process provided a means to connect my data from the 12 virtual interviews to categories identified under self-efficacy beliefs of the FGS, the environment at William & Mary, and the students' decision-making around selecting a major (Merriam, 1998).

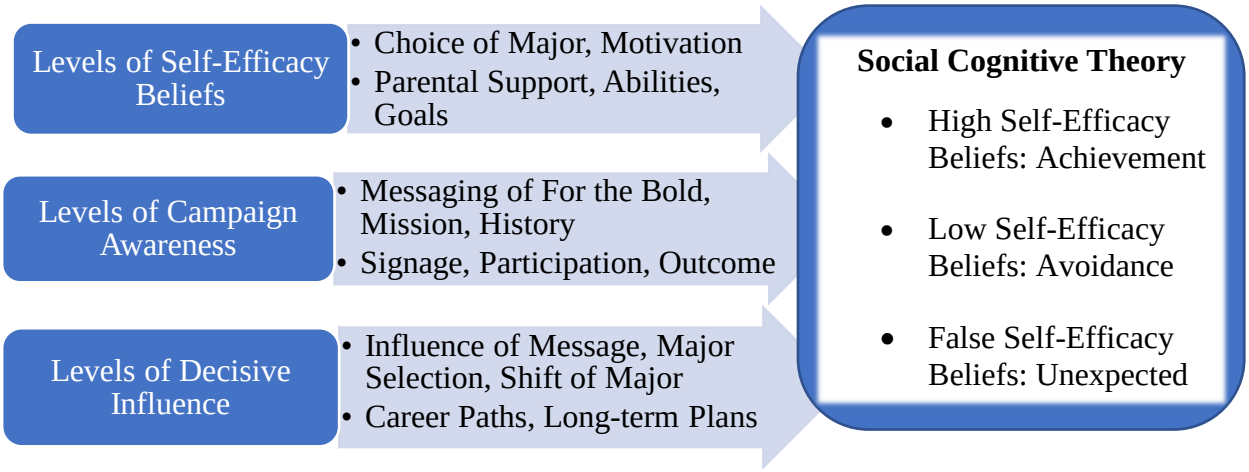
Notably, I assigned names to the three categories, specifically *Levels of Self-Efficacy Beliefs* of the 12 FGS, *Levels of Campaign Awareness* of For the Bold's implemented message, and *Levels of Decisive Influence* in the selection of majors and formation of career paths based on any described influence of the campaign by the FGS (Merriam, 1998). Categories may be named based on the decision of the researcher, the identity or role of the participants, or the literature that extends beyond the study itself (Merriam, 1998). I, as the sole researcher, named each category to reflect the case study's research questions, Bandura's social cognitive theory, and the adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC.

Additionally, after I categorized responses from the 12 FGS into the three specific levels, through the coding and reduction of significant factors into single units of analysis, I also grouped similar themes together within each level of categorization based on similarities and commonalities that were discovered from the collected data (Merriam, 1998). Moreover, I designed a graphic (see Figure 6) to visualize how each level represents the data collected and reflects my theoretical framework, specifically as the data was broken down into smaller units to search for themes shared through the interviews. For example, I categorized portions of individual responses from Interview Question 1 (see Appendix D), which included the sub-question "Describe at least two motivating/influencing factors leading to the selection of your academic discipline." My cross-analysis of all three levels, regarding the motivating factors described by the 12 FGS, provided a critical analysis of the interviews to obtain the most accurate documentation of any connectivity between the campaign and the selection of academic majors and possible career paths from the respondents' perspective. Pointedly, keeping the categorization to only three categories allowed for a greater identification of findings among the

data and the opportunity to discuss specific findings with various groups and offices within higher education, including academic advising and student affairs.

Figure 6

Levels of Categorization for Data Analysis



Note. The named categories helped manage the data and reflect the purpose of this case study.

Through coding and categorization of my collected data, I sought to understand possible connections between the 12 FGS and the campaign. I also considered how the academic goals and personal commitments of the participating FGS may have varied depending on their self-efficacy beliefs. Based on my theoretical framework of Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, "The self is socially constituted, but, by exercising self-influence, individuals are partial contributors to what they become and do" (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). Notably, I focused on the campaign's implementation of the For the Bold message as a major contributor to William & Mary's campus climate while the FGS progressed through their second year, both on and off campus. Additionally, factors of stress, anxiety, and alienation connected to the COVID-19 pandemic as these students experienced their sophomore year also remained a focal point as the pandemic played a significant role in their academic environment.

Researcher as Instrument

As the sole researcher involved in this case study on William & Mary's FGS, I recognized the necessity to produce trustworthiness and authenticity as it relates to my collection of qualitative data gathered from FGS. Unlike a traditional, quantitative design, my case study avoided the search for one common reality or the application that produced one outcome. Moreover, I acknowledged limitations to the generalizability of my findings due to the qualitative nature of the study and the extensive amount of attention placed on human behavior. For example, by inquiring how one individual participant weighed his or her confidence level against the selection of an academic discipline, I, as the researcher, received a specific response related to one participant's perspective (Merriam, 1998). To aid in bias awareness, I wrote a researcher statement prior to the start of the study (see Appendix A), and I remained aware of potential researcher bias as I maintained a researcher's journal during the study. The statement acknowledges my academic background as a first-generation female student and my professional background as a journalist and a former college lecturer of journalism and public relations.

Due to the specificity of my case study, mainly its focus on a small group of FGS at a small, elite higher education institution in Virginia, I did not expect to produce external validity for researchers to apply my findings at other universities and colleges. "In qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true to many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). My participant responses tied directly to the FGS experiences at William & Mary and the students' acknowledgement of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. However, the findings related to the possible connection between self-efficacy beliefs and institutional branding may provide insight for advancement and communications practitioners as the data

gathered from this case study may encourage future research on FGS enrolled in higher education institutions. My findings may also lead to the development of additional case studies on the self-efficacy of first-generation college students following the discovery that, at William & Mary, the FGS interviewed shared academic perspectives and experiences that differ from popular, peer-respected research, particularly topics of parental support, traditional selections of majors by gender, and low motivation during a FGS's sophomore year.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

In this case study, I assumed the FGS participants would have expressed a heightened need for academic direction from their professors and peers due to the lack of guidance provided from their family regarding the demands and benefits of higher education. Based on my own experience as a first-generation college student, developing a clear understanding of options, both academically and professionally, can create overwhelming obstacles when progressing without any prior knowledge of campus environments or scholarly expectations. My assumptions were met with a combination of confidence in commitment to assignments and research required at a sophomore level at William & Mary and with clear expectations of possibilities offered through their selected majors. Some FGS expressed self-doubt in capabilities as FGS moved closer to career planning, yet they described a mission to obtain what they indicated as goals after graduation, which ranged from monetary security to respect from their professional peers.

This study was delimited to FGS attending William & Mary in Fall 2020. The move to a limited on-campus experience in the fall due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may have resulted in some of the FGS (out of the total 149) opting not to return to campus after their freshman year and opting for a gap year or transfer instead. This case study also recognized the limitations in the applicability of its research, specifically the ability to compare the findings to

other strategic branding practices at other higher education institutions. William & Mary welcomes global recognition and holds an institutional identity that produces academic appeal and support from its students (William & Mary, 2018a). Consequently, the qualitative approach to my research on the elite institution's campaign branding limits the opportunity to transfer the study's results to other higher education institutions with similar concerns over branding, the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS, and academic outcomes. For example, the online survey prompts regarding self-efficacy may apply to all undergraduates attending most higher education institutions as it refers to study habits, persistence, and connectivity to career goals. Yet, the survey responses may reflect the expectations set by William & Mary. Phase 2 of the case study focused on the institutional branding of For the Bold implemented by William & Mary, which will not provide a mirrored outcome at other colleges and institutions.

Awareness of institutional branding also varies for individual students enrolled at any university or college that implements branded messages. In 2019, William & Mary's website stressed the significant connection between the university and its alumni, stating,

> The Alma Mater of the Nation maintains a firm grip on its position as the No. 1 nationally ranked public university for undergraduate alumni participation—surpassing several Ivy League institutions—and continues its focus on providing exceptional offerings for alumni, parents and friends, particularly related to networking and professional development. (Wall, 2019, para. 1)

Nonetheless, the case study's measurement of the influence of For the Bold on the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS may raise levels of awareness regarding institutional branding among student communities and university advancement and marketing teams within higher education institutions.

Ethical Considerations and Timeframe

Following my completion of the IRB process and the approval to reach out to FGS, I offered the option of anonymity to all online survey participants and pseudonymity to all 12 FGS who interviewed in the study. I was unable to offer a pseudonym for the institution considering that the fundraising campaign served as a critical component in selecting William & Mary as a case site. As for the pace of the conducted research, I paralleled my data collection with the timeline of when William & Mary's FGS were considering and making their declaration of a major in the fall of 2020. The study transitioned to stages of analysis, findings, and discussion between January and April of 2021, with a conclusion of the study in June of 2021.

Summary

My respondent-centered analysis of data collected from an online survey and individual virtual interviews served as an appropriate approach to determine possible influence that William & Mary's For the Bold campaign may have had on its FGS as they selected academic majors and developed professional goals. Additionally, I applied an adaptation of Bandura's (1986) TRC model to narrow in on the personal, environmental, and behavioral aspects of the 12 students interviewed. By doing so, I searched deeper into the analysis of possible influence by the campaign's message that stated William & Mary represented a community of *bold* members, and I explored the possibility that the 12 students may have shifted their academic expectations as a result of the campaign messaging. In addition to the FGS being enrolled at a small, elite, historically founded institution, I acknowledged that the case study results reflected a period when all FGS participants and the William & Mary community faced unprecedented circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As I discuss my findings in Chapter 4, the online survey results provide indications of high and low self-efficacy beliefs among FGS as well as from detailed accounts taken from the individual virtual interviews, including the focus on student backgrounds and influences prior to entering an elite college setting. Notably, the findings documented from the interviews reflected how the implementation timeline of the campaign messaging aligned with decision-making of the 12 students during their sophomore year, leading to possible influence in their self-efficacy beliefs. Future studies that focus on institutional branding and the self-efficacy beliefs of specific student groups may consider the findings from Chapter 4 with the understanding that this case study offers examples on a smaller academic setting.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

William & Mary's For the Bold fundraising campaign, publicly launching in 2015 and concluding in 2020, raised more than $1 billion over the campaign timeline to support academic excellence and to provide for sustainable service and resources. The campaign distributed digital and printed materials and promoted the practice of giving through speeches and recorded messages. Pointedly, the last portion of the campaign occurred amidst the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when classes transitioned to online learning, forcing faculty, staff, and students to remote work settings in the spring of 2020. The pandemic placed a direct test on the institution to close out a successful campaign and to meet academic expectations under unprecedented circumstances. The first-generation sophomores (FGS) in the study experienced disruption as they made decisions about their academic major and future career options. This research study sought to understand better the influence of the For the Bold campaign on the self-efficacy of FGS on campus during this period of decision-making.

Well prior to the occurrence of the pandemic, the For the Bold campaign reflected the significance of community and collaboration across William & Mary's campus (William & Mary, 2020a). The university distributed a message of unity throughout the promotion of the campaign, which emphasized fundraising efforts and the position that strength and boldness existed within one tribe (Advancement Staff, 2019). In February of 2016, William & Mary's former president Taylor Reveley (2016) reached out to students to provide a summary of For the Bold's mission. "This is a Campaign about the people. Combined, William & Mary's students

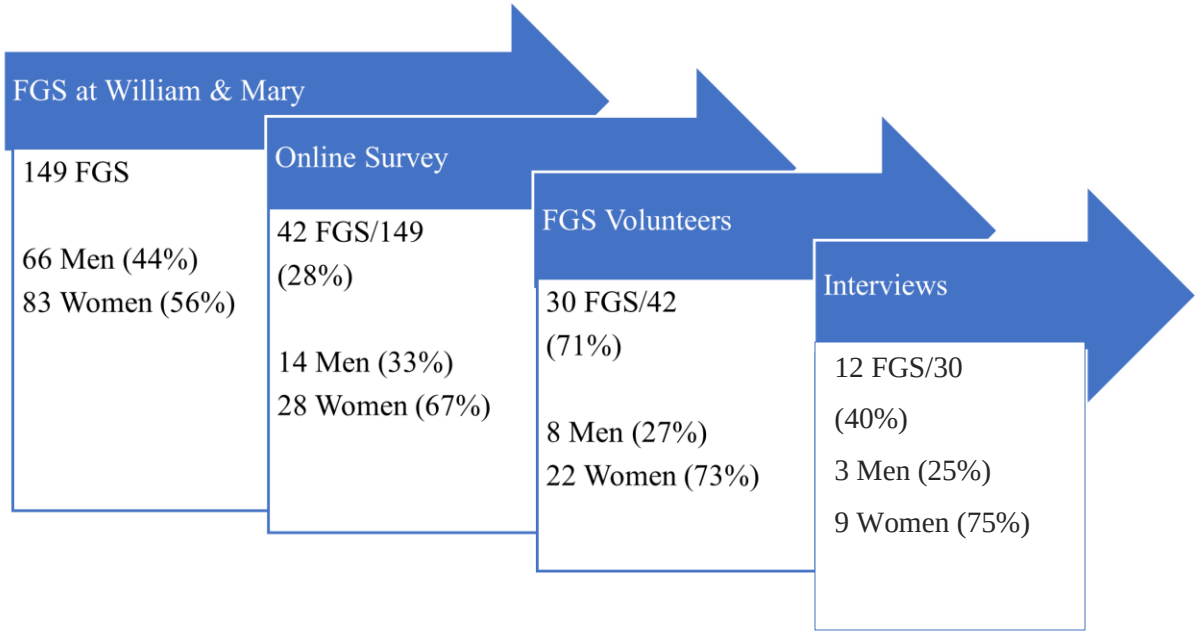
and faculty, and the learning that occurs when their minds meet, account for more than three-quarters of the billion dollars we seek," he said (para. 5). Stressing that 35% of the fundraising goal centered on scholarships, Reveley shared that the campaign would enable William & Mary to serve all capable students who wish to earn a degree from the university (Reveley, 2016). This information was posted on the university website, yet it is unknown whether any of the case study participants were aware of it. None mentioned this specific reference during the interviews.

The 149 FGS who were enrolled during the 2020-2021 academic year (66 men and 83 women) were among those who may have received the strategic messaging of the campaign during their time on campus and during the pandemic and the pivot to remote learning when data collection for this study occurred. Notably, due to the timeframe of selecting a major during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the participants recognized how the global health crisis influenced their decision-making. Yet, those FGS who shared their experiences about working through the pandemic did so voluntarily without any prompts added within the case study.

My findings first provide a summary of the responses of 42 FGS who completed an online survey. The findings also include the self-efficacy belief levels of 30 (out of the 42) survey participants who volunteered to be contacted for individual interviews. Next, profiles of the 12 participants (out of the 30) who were interviewed are provided (see Figure 7). Finally, emerging themes and findings from the interview are presented to answer the two research questions driving this case study. In Figure 7 and throughout data collection is evidence of a non-response bias as more women than men completed the online survey, responded to participate in Phase 2 of the study, and held virtual interviews.

Figure 7

Groups of First-generation Sophomores at William & Mary and Case Study Participants



Note. The breakdown shows the progression of first-generation sophomore participants within the case study and the data collection applied.

Because the FGS in this study had selected or were selecting their majors as the 2020-2021 academic year arrived, it was central to this study to understand how their self-efficacy beliefs may have been influenced by the institution's For the Bold campaign messaging. Using a respondent-centered approach to collect the data provided an opportunity for participants to voice their perspectives on how they selected their majors and career paths and to note any influence of the campaign on their decision-making. After critical analysis of the data collected from FGS interviewees within my case study, I concluded that the branded campaign, which was publicly implemented by William & Mary over 5 years, produced various levels of awareness of For the Bold among those participants interviewed. However, the campaign's message only

showed levels of influence on the self-efficacy beliefs of one of the FGS (Joe). Evidence from my findings is presented in the following sections of Chapter 4.

Influence of Campaign Messaging on Self-Efficacy

As outlined in the methods chapter, an online survey was conducted to collect data on the levels of self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS to then inform the findings of the two research questions and sub-questions. This first approach to data collection and data analysis represents Phase 1 in the case study. The applied survey helped determine high and low levels of self-efficacy beliefs among the participating FGS, with a total of 42 FGS completing the online survey (14 men/33% and 28 women/67%) for a response rate of 28%. Of the 42 FGS respondents, 71% (30 FGS) offered to participate further in individual virtual interviews, which is referred to as Phase 2. All 30 online survey responders, specifically eight men (27%) and 22 women (73%), included their email addresses for future contact to possibly move forward in the second stage of the case study.

The survey responses collected from the 30 FGS from Phase 1 showed diverse levels of self-efficacy beliefs (see Table 2 in Chapter 3, p. 63). Notably in the study was the lower participation of male FGS relative to women. For example, the total number of male FGS represent 44% of this population, whereas men responded to the survey at a lower rate (33%) and their representation declined among those who responded to volunteer for Phase 2 (27%). This evidence of non-response bias in the survey responses and in volunteers for Phase 2 of the study underscores that caution should be taken in extrapolating the findings. The findings address only the perspectives of those involved in the study and not all FGS at William & Mary.

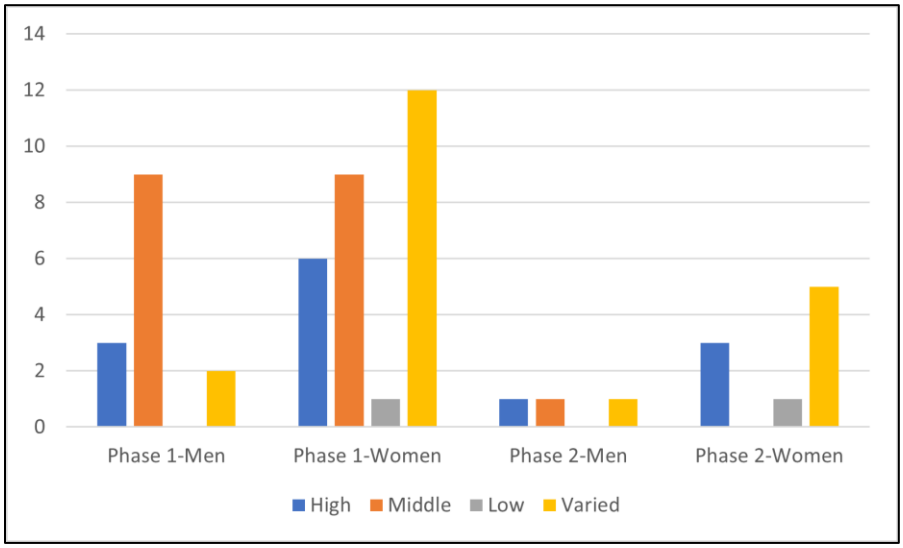
Of the 42 FGS who participated in the online survey (see Appendix G), my findings showed that out of 14 male FGS, 21% (3) held high self-efficacy beliefs, 64% (9) of FGS men

indicated a middle range of beliefs, and 14% (2) showed a varied level. None of the male FGS within the 42 responders indicated low self-efficacy beliefs. Only one female FGS respondent to the survey indicated a low level of self-efficacy. Thus, low self-efficacy was not prevalent among the participants who volunteered to participate in Phase 2 of the research. The survey captured the self-efficacy levels of the FGS who participated and did not ask at this stage about the influence of the campaign on these outcomes.

Additionally, when focusing on the 28 females who participated in the online survey, 21% (n = 6) held high levels of self-efficacy beliefs, 32% (n = 9) of the women shared middle-ranged responses, 43% (n = 12) expressed varied levels, and 4% (n = 1) held low self-efficacy (see Figure 8). Ultimately, nine women and three men from the online survey respondents answered my email requests for participation and agreed to move forward with Phase 2 of the case study. The 12 FGS represented a group of students where half were operating with varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs as they determined their majors and career paths during the last stages of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. The self-efficacy belief levels of the 12 participants (see Table 4) in Phase 2 will be discussed in greater detail further in Chapter 4.

Figure 8

Self-Efficacy Level Comparisons of Survey Participants



Note. The bar graph provides self-efficacy levels from all 42 first-generation sophomore participants from the online survey (Phase 1) and the 12 first-generation sophomore survey participants who also held virtual interviews (Phase 2).

Phase 1: Findings from Online Survey Responses

The online survey used in this study consisted of 14 prompts (see Appendix B) to determine levels of self-efficacy among FGS. The survey was administered in October of 2020 via the William & Mary student email system to all full-time FGS enrolled at William & Mary for the Fall 2020 semester. The survey prompts were used to investigate the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS in regards to their own ability and confidence and encouraged the FGS to consider how they were meeting the demands of coursework and the requirements of their selected major. The survey also queried about the students' decision-making process leading to their career paths and provided participants the opportunity to volunteer for an individual follow-up interview.

Survey Demographics. In addition to gathering data on the self-efficacy levels of FGS at William & Mary during Fall 2020, the case study's online survey focused on basic demographics

of the participants. The survey responses totaled a 2 to 1 ratio of women to men (28 female FGS and 14 male FGS). The number of female undergraduates at William & Mary in 2020 totaled 59% (3665) (Univstats, 2021), which was similar to the demographics of all female FGS on campus (56%) (C. Springer, personal communication, September 25, 2020). Notably, women FGS were dominantly represented in all groups within this case study, including the 30 FGS (women were 73% and are over-represented among the total of women FGS of 56%) who offered contact information to participate in Phase 2 and the 12 FGS who volunteered to participate in independent virtual interviews (women represented 75% of FGS who volunteered to be interviewed). The percentages of male FGS participating in the online survey (33%) who volunteered to be interviewed (27%) and who were interviewed (25%) were not reflective of the available male FGS population of 66 men (44%) attending William & Mary in the fall of 2020.

To help add context to the backgrounds of each FGS, the survey asked, "Do you have one or more siblings who have entered a higher education institution as a first-generation college student?" (see Appendix B). Of the 14 male FGS, 12 indicated that no siblings had entered a college or university compared to the 16 out of 28 female students who stated the same. Women respondents were more likely to have siblings in college (43%) compared to their male counterparts (14%). Focusing specifically on the 12 survey participants who were later interviewed, three women and no men replied "Yes" to the prompt. Notably, having a sibling in college could provide the potential of shared information on lessons learned regarding selecting a major and career pathway. As a result of the lack of siblings in college for the FGS, no findings linked to the influence of siblings on the participants' experiences. Lastly, of the 14 male survey participants, two indicated that they had selected business majors, while the remaining 12 stated

that they were pursuing majors in the Arts and Sciences. All 28 female FGS responded that they had selected majors within William & Mary's Arts & Sciences.

Identity Scale. The 42 FGS who responded to the online survey in Phase 1 provided indications of their own self-efficacy beliefs through the 14 prompts (see Appendix G). As described in detail in Chapter 3, to document the levels of self-efficacy beliefs as discovered in the online survey responses, I focused on each online survey prompt specifically and considered how strongly a FGS agreed or disagreed based on his or her response. For example, if a FGS entered a "Strongly Agree" response to the prompt "Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me," I recorded the student as holding a low self-efficacy level for the specific survey prompt and specific circumstance. Once I recorded all 14 responses from a single FGS, I then determined the student's overall self-efficacy beliefs as high, middle-ranged, low, or varied based on his/her total number of responses.

For convenience, Table 4, a replication of Table 2 in Chapter 3, showcases the findings of self-efficacy from the survey in percentage format. This table shows the range of self-efficacy among the participants that may be applied in additional research focused on influences of self-efficacy among FGS at William & Mary. Notably, for the purpose of this study, middle-ranged levels of self-efficacy beliefs were noted when a student's online survey prompt responses indicated beliefs in their abilities and confidence that ranged from *Somewhat Agree* to *Somewhat Disagree*. Additionally, the self-efficacy belief levels of a FGS participant were recorded as varied if the student's survey responses ranged from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. For example, the 42 FGS indicated varied self-efficacy beliefs when responding to the prompt that focused on existing financial limitations and their first choice of academic major. Moreover, the majority of the 42 students held middle-ranged self-efficacy beliefs in their abilities to continue

working through assignments that seemed boring to them or that required them to study without distractions.

Table 4

Self-Efficacy Belief Levels of All Online Survey Respondents and Gender (Replication)

Participants	Self-Efficacy Belief Level							
	High		Middle		Low		Varied	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
42 FGS	21%	21%	64%	32%	0%	4%	14%	43%
	n = 3	n = 6	n = 9	n = 9	n = 0	n = 1	n = 2	n = 12
30 FGS	25%	18%	23%	27%	0%	5%	13%	50%
	n = 2	n = 4	n = 5	n = 6	n = 0	n = 1	n = 1	n = 11
12 FGS	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	11%	33%	56%
	n = 1	n = 3	n = 1	n = 0	n = 0	n = 1	n = 1	n = 5

Note. Table 4 provides self-efficacy belief levels taken from all online survey participants (Total-42, Volunteers-30, and Interviewed-12) and is categorized from largest (42 FGS) to smallest (12 FGS) groups of first-generation sophomores and by gender.

By narrowing my focus to each individual prompt response of each FGS and then determining self-efficacy belief levels based on the responses of all 14 prompts from each student, I allowed for further exploration into the possible influence of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign messaging on the self-efficacy beliefs of the final 12 FGS participants (see Appendix H). Notably in Table 4, the data collection discovered a non-response bias in men FGS throughout each group of participants. As discussed earlier, no men indicated low beliefs and only one female expressed a low level, and she was included among the group of 12 FGS. I emphasize the low self-efficacy belief level expressed by the one female FGS participant, Susan, recognizing her participation in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study. Of particular interest is that Susan's low level of self-efficacy was only evident in her online survey responses. Her ability and confidence expressed in the virtual interview indicated a high level of self-efficacy. This disconnection highlights the importance of including the follow-up interviews in the study,

and it raises the issue of how participants may self-report efficacy on survey responses versus how they may self-disclose low self-efficacy in person in performative exchanges.

I found that, out of the 42 survey participants, six women expressed high levels of self-efficacy beliefs and three of those women agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the study. Notably, there was no selection criteria for those who participated in the Phase 2 interviews, as all that followed up on the request were interviewed. Lastly, I recognized through the table that nine men and nine women from the total participants of 42 FGS indicated middle-ranged self-efficacy levels. Only one male FGS from this categorized level was willing to move forward in the study, following my emailed requests to participate in Phase 2, and no women agreed to participate from this level.

Phase 2: 12 FGS Participants

FGS participants who responded to all online survey prompts were asked to include their email address for future contact in hopes of their participation in Phase 2 of the case study. By adding contact information, 30 FGS participants indicated their willingness to hold an individual virtual interview. I distributed requests for interviews, via email, to all 30 FGS participants in late October of 2020. Out of those online survey participants, the 12 FGS (nine females and three males) agreed to participate in the second phase of the study. Before holding the virtual interviews, I separated the 12 FGS' online survey responses from the original 42 survey participants (see Appendix H), and I categorized the self-efficacy belief levels of each 12 participants as high, middle-ranged, low, or varied for closer analysis (see Table 5).

Table 5

Self-Efficacy Belief Levels of 12 First-generation Sophomores from Online Survey

Participants	Self-Efficacy Belief Level			
	High	Middle	Low	Varied
P1 – Joe		X		
P2 – Jane	X			
P3 – Spencer				X
P4 – Emily	X			
P5 – Caitlin				X
P6 – Susan			X	
P7 – Kim	X			
P8 – Hannah				X
P9 – Angela				X
P10 – Lisa				X
P11 – Thomas	X			
P12 – Marissa				X

Note. Table 5 includes self-efficacy belief levels, as indicated in the online survey, of 12 first-generation sophomores who later participated in individual virtual interviews.

Representation of Survey Responses and Self-Efficacy Beliefs. Once the 12 FGS from the online survey participants indicated their willingness to proceed to Phase 2 (virtual interviews), I was also able to consider survey demographics for the smaller group relative to the total survey respondents (42 students). In the group of FGS interviewed in Phase 2, women represented nine participants relative to 28 survey respondents and 83 of the total FGS population at William & Mary. Notably, more women responded to the survey and volunteered (75%) to be interviewed as compared to male FGS. Male students in Phase 2 represented three participants (25%) relative to 14 male survey respondents and 66 of the total FGS population at the university. Lastly, all 12 FGS in Phase 2 indicated that they were seeking degrees from

William & Mary's Arts & Sciences. Student profiles of each of the 12 interview participants are presented to provide more details and themes emerging in the study.

Comparisons of Survey Responses and Self-Efficacy Beliefs. I explored the self-efficacy beliefs expressed through online survey prompts of the 12 FGS participants who were also interviewed by reviewing how their survey responses reflected similar or different self-efficacy belief levels compared to all survey group respondents (42 FGS). For example, when considering responses to the prompt "I always work as hard as I can to finish my assignments," 17 of the 42 (40%) survey participants said they *Strongly Agree* compared to seven students (58%) from the smaller group of 12 FGS who also strongly agreed. This finding may indicate a difference in motivation among the group that opted into Phase 2 of the study.

However, responses to the prompt "I am uncertain about my ability to finish the education or training" showed that only six of the 42 participants (14%) from the online survey selected *Strongly Agree*, yet five of the 12 FGS who were also interviewed selected *Strongly Agree* (42%). Thus, it is important to recognize that, even though those interviewed (12 FGS) felt they were working hard on their classwork, they were more likely to indicate a concern about finishing their degree. Based on these findings, I conclude that their level of self-doubt about degree completion may have driven them to work as hard as possible to finish their assignments.

Focusing on persistence and interest in academic work, the majority of the 42 survey respondents indicated that they may become easily distracted, with most responses noting *Somewhat Agree* (16 FGS; 38%). The 12 survey participants who were also interviewed indicated an even greater response, with the majority stating *Somewhat Agree* (seven FGS; 58%). I recognized the significance of the high level of distraction that all the FGS faced in this study during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of equal importance was the high number of participants who

indicated varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs through their entered responses ranging from *Somewhat Agree* to *Somewhat Disagree*, which points to paradoxes of their belief in their abilities to perform at a highly selective university like William & Mary.

Male FGS Participants. When considering the prompt responses from all 14 male FGS in the overall survey, they showed high levels of self-efficacy beliefs when considering their own dedication and commitment to their academic study. However, more than half of the men indicated low to middle-ranged levels of self-efficacy beliefs when they considered the prompt, "My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year" (see Table 6). Additionally, half of the male FGS participants responded to the prompt, "I am uncertain about my ability to finish the necessary education or training" with doubts (see Table 6). Notably, the three male survey participants who also gave virtual interviews in Phase 2 of the case study showed low to middle-ranged levels of self-efficacy beliefs when considering the two prompts.

Table 6

Male First-generation Sophomores and Belief in Academic Ability

Participants	**Online Survey Results**	
14 Men	Varied Abilities and Talents	Uncertain of Ability to Finish Education or Training
Strongly Agree	3 21%	2 14%
Agree	2 14%	3 21%
Somewhat Agree	4 29%	2 14%

Note. Table 6 reflected the self-efficacy beliefs of male participants of the online survey who selected the options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Somewhat Agree" as they considered their abilities and talents from year to year and their ability to complete their college education.

These findings proved helpful when answering the two research questions driving the case study as it provided additional insight regarding the perceived ability and confidence of each participating FGS, specifically that of completion of their selected degrees and career planning. Returning to RQ1a, which asks how high and low self-efficacy beliefs of FGS influence the selection of majors, I connected the indicated self-efficacy beliefs from each online survey prompt response to the individual responses of the three male interview participants to provide a more defined indication of why the students held specific beliefs. By doing so, I then explored the opportunities given for William & Mary's For the Bold campaign messaging to influence those self-efficacy beliefs.

Female FGS Participants. The female FGS participants of the online survey included in Table 7 provided different responses compared to the male FGS regarding the prompt that focused on abilities and talents from year to year. For example, in Table 6, 14% of the men agreed, whereas 32% of the women in Table 7 agreed to facing this challenge. Additionally, a difference was discovered in the number of women (39%) who somewhat agreed to the prompt referencing the ability to complete their education or training when compared to the male participants (14%). When narrowing this focus down to the females (nine women) who also participated in the virtual interviews, they showed similar self-efficacy beliefs to the females (28 women) who participated in the online survey. More than half of the women who were also interviewed indicated doubts when responding to the two prompts (see Appendices G and H).

Table 7

Female First-generation Sophomores and Belief in Academic Abilities

Participants	**Online Survey Results**	
28 Women	Varied Abilities and Talents	Uncertain of Ability to Finish Education or Training
Strongly Agree	5 18%	5 18%
Agree	9 32%	3 11%
Somewhat Agree	5 18%	11 39%

Note. Table 7 reflected the self-efficacy beliefs of female participants of the online survey who selected the options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Somewhat Agree" as they considered their abilities and talents from year to year and the ability to complete their college education.

Looking again at RQ1a, these levels of doubt indicate that the campaign did not influence the women's self-efficacy beliefs, specifically their confidence to make bold decisions. I included this evidence when holding individual interviews and cross-examining the survey responses to the interview responses. As discussed by Bandura (1986), an individual's self-efficacy level may be low, while still accepting a false reality of achieving goals through his or her abilities and confidence. This acceptance of false reality may lead to unintended outcomes.

Notably, the nine women participating in Phase 2 of the study expressed responses similar to the three male participants who were interviewed. For example, seven of the female students in Phase 2 showed lower to middle-ranged self-efficacy beliefs when responding to the prompts asking the FGS what occupation they would enjoy. Three strongly agreed, one agreed, and three somewhat agreed this was difficult to decide. Five of the nine women also showed lower responses regarding their ability to determine a career choice. Four strongly agreed and

one agreed that this process was challenging. The findings taken from the collected data served as key indicators of perceived ability and confidence among the women who participated in the survey and the virtual interviews as this case study explored the possible influence of William & Mary's For the Bold messaging on their self-efficacy beliefs, specifically as they determined their majors and formed professional expectations. These lower level responses indicated that the campaign did not positively influence the participants' self-efficacy beliefs.

Summary of Comparisons. The data collected from the online survey highlighted significant findings within the study, including the differences and similarities in responses to each survey prompt. The responses, broken down from the total of 42 FGS to gender groups and to the smaller group of 12 participants, indicated high levels of confidence in the ability to complete coursework and to practice strong study habits. However, the prompt responses also showed evidence of doubt when the FGS considered the completion of their education and their progression to professional fields. This finding expanded across both groups (42 and 12 FGS) and gender.

Phase 2 Participant Profiles

In this section, profiles of the 12 interview participants are presented to highlight information about individual self-efficacy levels, selection of major, and factors influencing the decision-making process. Each profile of the individual participants served as insight into the FGS's background leading up to his or her sophomore year, which provided a better understanding of the student's perception of his or her own self-efficacy. Lastly, I acknowledged that each participant lived in different circumstances due to required or opted-in online learning classwork, physical settings, and social engagement, and I recognized possible limitations in the ability of FGS to receive William & Mary's For the Bold campaign messaging given the

COVID-19 pandemic. Pseudonyms were created to refer to each participant to avoid sharing the true identities of each FGS.

Joe

Joe, a male FGS, selected computer science as his major and planned to officially declare his major near the end of the first semester of his sophomore year, which would occur during the Fall 2020 semester. During his interview, Joe indicated connectivity to William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, specifically referring to his ability and the opportunity to pursue a technological field at the university. More significant was his appreciation of a promotional video that included the For the Bold campaign messaging, which he selected to view while researching possible institutions to apply as an undergraduate. He believed the video confirmed his decision to select William & Mary as a higher education institution and that the university's community welcomed him as a first-generation student. Joe believed that he was "pretty confident" in his ability to achieve his academic goals, and his online survey responses indicated that he held middle-ranged self-efficacy beliefs.

Additionally, Joe recalled individuals who were included in the William & Mary video, and he explained that he wanted to learn more about their goals and sources of motivation. Referring back to the case study's research questions on the influence of self-efficacy, Joe pointed out language from the video, including "Be bold" and "Be courageous" as sources of direction leading up to confirming his selection of academic major. The FGS specifically referenced his closest friends from high school who also attended William & Mary. "We're studying the same things, so we keep each other encouraged with new ideas—encouraging one another and keeping our passions lit." Furthermore, he stated that William & Mary's For the

Bold campaign messaging strengthened his confidence. The FGS stressed that he hoped to approach problems in which scientists have yet to discover a solution.

Jane

Showing a high level of self-efficacy beliefs through the online survey, Jane selected to major in biomedical engineering, a historically non-traditional gender choice given the minority of women in engineering. She spent time working as a firefighter starting in her junior year of high school and received motivation from a Harvard professor who she encountered through friends of her family. This encounter contributed to Jane's decision to select her academic major. Additionally, she received support in her decision to major in biomedical engineering from her grandfather and peers. Yet, despite high levels of self-efficacy and motivation, Jane expressed doubts. "I do have a sense of, I guess, fear that I won't get it done." What remains unknown is what could help dissipate this level of fear of not completing or how this perspective reflects gender socialization regarding career selection. Lastly, Jane stated she was aware of the For the Bold campaign on campus based on developments related to athletics, cutbacks, and funding constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the campaign's goal to raise $1 billion was a positive act, but she believed her selection of major and possible career path were unrelated to the campus campaign.

Spencer

Selecting a major of interdisciplinary studies, Spencer shared that he changed his mind frequently regarding his decision about what to select as a major, and it wasn't until late in his freshmen year that he narrowed it down to an interdisciplinary studies major including biology and kinesiology. He stated that his parents were unfamiliar with his academic environment but encouraged his happiness and fulfillment in his selected major, and his peers played a bigger role

in his decision-making process as he credited them for keeping his doubts of success to a minimum. Notably, Spencer entered varied responses to the case study's online survey prompts about self-efficacy. Although he believed that William & Mary's For the Bold campaign had not influenced his decision to select interdisciplinary studies as a major, Spencer was well aware of the campaign's effort to raise $1 billion.

Emily

Emily selected environmental policy and law as her major due to her interest in social issues. She was motivated by organized social activism stemming from the Black Lives Matter movement, and she was also interested in gender studies. Emily said that her parents only partially supported her selection of major as they preferred that she fully concentrate on the study of law. She noted reliance on her peers who had shown high levels of support, and Emily believed that she would need courage, determination, and persistence to complete her selected major, stating that she was "super confident" in succeeding. Emily's online survey responses pointed to high levels of self-efficacy beliefs, which aligned with her virtual interview. However, regarding campaign messaging and related initiatives, she had only scant familiarity with the For the Bold campaign.

Caitlin

Similar to her online survey responses, Caitlin expressed a wide range of self-efficacy beliefs throughout her virtual interview. Her selection of computer science and studio art as a double major also reflected her range of interests. She explained that her parents had taken a "hands-off" approach to her academic experience, which may have contributed to varied levels of self-efficacy. Yet, she also recognized that she had an advisor at William & Mary to help develop her academic and professional path, and she valued this form of support.

During her interview, Caitlin stated that she was aware of the For the Bold campaign at William & Mary and the campaign's completed goal of raising $1 billion by 2020. She connected the money raised to the benefit of student and faculty interests, the development of programs, and growth across campus. Receiving funding to attend William & Mary, which was helped by the fundraising through the For the Bold campaign, Caitlin shared that she reached her decision about a major in her first year and believed that the campaign indirectly influenced her selection of academic major based on provided financial assistance. However, she commented, "I don't feel like I'm capable at all—that I am behind everyone, but I don't know why." Yet, Caitlin also added that she selected William & Mary, which was among her options of universities to attend, based on her belief that the campus culture appeared to be the best match for her.

Susan

Susan selected international relations as her major. In high school, she joined a group that concentrated on global studies and considered the opportunity to learn more about culture and language as key motivating factors leading to the selection of her major and career formation. Her parents offered support regardless of her choice in major, as did her peers, yet Susan explained that upper class students discouraged her from committing to the field as they believed the personal and professional gain would fail to match the money, time, and effort dedicated over four years of study. Surprisingly, given her commentary during the interview, Susan's online survey responses reflected low levels of self-efficacy beliefs. These findings differed greatly from the responses to her individual virtual interview responses where she indicated high levels of confidence and belief in her own abilities.

Notably, she also participated in the For the Bold campaign's phone-a-thon designed to contact targeted groups for financial giving, and she felt connected to the campaign. "I think the whole sort of spirit of the campaign is really nice and reassuring, not just for me, but for a lot of students." Of particular interest to Susan was For the Bold's focus on student scholarships, which she discovered would benefit low-income students. However, despite her direct experience with the campaign, Susan stated that the messaging did not influence her selection of major.

Kim

Kim indicated a high level of self-efficacy beliefs through the online survey and in the virtual interview. She selected kinesiology as her major and shared that the field piqued her interest in high school. Yet, she used her first year as an opportunity to weigh academic options, exploring the field of kinesiology along with aspects of STEM before reaching her decision. Kim explained that she did not experience any shifts in expectations about her selected major and noted that she was motivated by working around others in the field. Kim also recognized the need to position herself in a better economic setting than her parents. She added that her parents did not provide encouragement as she progressed academically and shared that they were unfamiliar with her selection of major. Regarding the For the Bold campaign, she indicated awareness of the campaign's achievement of reaching $1 billion, that alumni were supportive in reaching the goal, and that some funding would support specific areas at William & Mary. However, Kim did not believe the campaign had influenced her decision to select kinesiology or had shaped her formation of career goals.

Hannah

Hannah selected to major in psychology following experiences gained through a high school program and increasing passion for the field. She credited a high school mentor and the desire to help others as motivating factors for selecting the major, and she acknowledged that both her parents and peers offered high levels of support as she pursued her major and contemplated her career path options. Despite high levels of self-efficacy noted in the interview, Hannah's online survey highlighted varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs. She also acknowledged awareness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, noting, "I know that it exists, there's a lot of money involved, and a lot of donations from alumni, but I'm not sure why." Hannah associated the money raised during the campaign with supporting construction projects across campus. Yet, similar to Susan and Kim, she explained that the campaign's message did not influence her decision to select psychology as a major nor did it shape her decisions in forming any professional goals.

Angela

Angela showed varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs through the online survey prompts and virtual interview. Additionally, the first-generation sophomore selected to major in linguistics after exploring several options during her first year at William & Mary. Searching for a connection to her personal and professional interests, she was attracted to the concept of the basic principles of language and recalled a shift in expectations and original plans from selecting a major related to international relations toward culture and communication through language. "If I get all my credits this semester, there is no backing out." Angela believed that her parents did not support her selection, and she shared that her peers seemed neutral regarding her decision

to study linguistics. Nonetheless, the student said that she is very confident in completing her degree.

Angela indicated awareness of For the Bold, specifically of the money raised through the campaign messaging. She also recalled frequently seeing the promotion of William & Mary's campaign. However, she did not attribute her persistence in finding the appropriate academic major to the messaging of the For the Bold campaign. Additionally, she stated that she had been "out of touch" during the Fall 2020 semester due to COVID-19, and she had not spent much time on campus. Although the campaign did not influence her decision to select her major, Angela believed that the messaging created an environment which allowed her to explore academic possibilities. She shared that the campaign was a big deal to the William & Mary community.

Lisa

Lisa represented the only student in the group interviewed who remained in the process of choosing a major. At the time of the interview, she was deciding between biology and kinesiology based on the motivating factors of helping other people and working in a biology-research lab setting. She indicated varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs in her online survey prompts and virtual interview. With support from both her parents and peers, Lisa believed she possessed the necessary abilities to succeed given her study habits and time management skills. Additionally, the choice, whether biology or kinesiology, flowed with her personal goals of helping others. She felt equally confident in the alignment with her professional goals. When asked about the For the Bold campaign, Lisa explained that she was aware of emails sent regarding the campaign, and she knew that William & Mary had reached the $1 billion goal in 2020. She attributed the success of the campaign to donations and the efforts of William & Mary

alumni and believed that most of the money raised was being used for scholarships. Nonetheless, she believed that the campaign would not influence her selection of academic major.

Thomas

Thomas selected to major in physics and quantum mechanics, which follows his early interest in science that began during his years in primary school. He showed a high level of self-efficacy beliefs when answering the online survey prompts and interview questions. Thomas credited his "intense interest in the field" and family as motivating factors leading to his decision, adding that salary potential in available career options and respect of his ability in the field were driving factors to complete the degree. He noted that his peers provided high levels of support regarding his study at William & Mary, yet he stated that he dealt with periods of depression that challenged his ability to concentrate. Thomas connected his limited awareness of the For the Bold campaign, which was established during the interview, with the opportunity to conduct research and produce meaningful work at William & Mary when sharing, "Personally, I would say that maybe the For the Bold campaign supports my knowing that I do want to be a physicist, also that I want to be able to help people." However, he did not believe the campaign had influenced his decision to select physics and quantum mechanics as a major.

Marissa

Marissa indicated varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs in her online survey responses and virtual interview. During the interview, she reflected that one of the first classes she completed at William & Mary led to her decision to select a major in computer/data science. Marissa originally planned to major in public policy, but she explained that the course content lacked interest for her. "I didn't really see myself in a STEM field," Marissa recalled. However, she shifted her choice of major in the Fall 2020 semester. She shared that her parents were neutral to

her major selection yet supported her commitment to higher education. Additionally, Marissa stated that she did not have many friends at the time of the interview, and, therefore, she lacked support from her peers. She also shared that she was "definitely aware" of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, noting that she heard about the campaign frequently. Yet, she added that she was not knowledgeable of the mission behind the message and said that the campaign did not influence her decision in selecting a major.

Summary of Participant Profiles

The profiles of the individual FGS interviewed for this study show that levels of self-efficacy sometimes differed between their survey responses and their answers to the interview prompts. What remains unknown is why this occurred. Table 8 below shows a summary of the responses of the participants regarding their level of awareness of the For the Bold campaign and the perceived influence it had on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs as they selected their majors and developed professional goals.

Table 8

Indication of Awareness and Influence of 12 First-generation Sophomores from Virtual Interviews

Participants	Awareness of William & Mary's Campaign	Influence on Self-Efficacy Beliefs
P1 – Joe	Yes	Yes
P2 – Jane	Yes	No
P3 – Spencer	Yes	No
P4 – Emily	Yes	No
P5 – Caitlin	Yes	No
P6 – Susan	Yes	No
P7 – Kim	Yes	No
P8 – Hannah	Yes	No
P9 – Angela	Yes	No
P10 – Lisa	Yes	No
P11 – Thomas	No	No
P12 – Marissa	Yes	No

Note. Table 8 includes indications made by 12 first-generation sophomore participants of awareness and influence of the For the Bold campaign message on their self-efficacy beliefs.

Campaign Influence on Selection of Majors and Career Paths

The purpose of this case study was to explore the influence, if any existed, from William & Mary's For the Bold campaign on the self-efficacy belief levels of FGS as they selected academic majors and began to pursue professional goals. To answer the two research questions driving the study, I used the responses from the online survey, which 42 FGS indicated their own perception of their self-efficacy, as a guide to probe further into the experiences of 12 FGS during the implementation of the campaign's branding and messaging across campus. By applying the framework of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, I considered how students

with high, middle, low, and varied levels of self-efficacy responded to William & Mary's For the Bold campaign as first-generation sophomores.

The 12 online survey participants who agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the case study responded to five main questions with sub-questions through individual virtual interviews to provide data to answer the research questions. The interview questions concentrated on levels of self-efficacy beliefs that included family and peer support, motivating factors leading up to the selection of majors and formation of career goals, awareness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, and, finally, the possible influence of the campaign's promotion and messaging (see Appendix D for the interview protocol) on self-efficacy. Through this process, I also considered the sub-questions within the case study, specifically asking if traditionally-gendered majors and/or careers aligned by gender for first-generation sophomores.

Findings from Individual Interviews

I conducted the interviews with the 12 participants between November 2 and December 5, 2020. The interview prompts helped explore the reasoning behind why a participant selected his or her major, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the existing levels of self-efficacy beliefs for each FGS interviewed, his or her environment during the Fall 2020 semester at William & Mary, the For the Bold campaign messaging, and the decisive behaviors at this critical point in their college career. The findings indicated that the FGS who had formed decisions regarding their academic majors prior to attending William & Mary, specifically Joe, Thomas, Jane, Susan, and Hannah, expressed confidence in their own abilities to succeed academically during their virtual interviews. Among the 12 FGS interviewed, 11 were aware of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign and four out of 12 were directly involved with or held strong awareness of the campaign's message.

Only one participant, Joe (middle-ranged self-efficacy) believed the campaign messaging influenced his self-efficacy. Notably, the interview protocol did not specifically ask about the campaign's influence on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs leading up to their decision about their major. Instead, it prompted the FGS interviewed to "Describe if the For the Bold campaign influenced your decision-making process in selecting your major and your career aspirations." Joe explained that the campaign messaging provided him with a sense of belonging and community, which increased his confidence in his abilities and decision-making as an undergrad at William & Mary.

Caitlin (varied self-efficacy) stated the For the Bold campaign had indirectly influenced her decision to double major in computer science and studio art as the financial aid connected to the campaign enabled her to attend the university. Although this case study does not recognize Caitlin's self-efficacy beliefs as being directly influenced by William & Mary's campaign, it acknowledged that she shared her awareness and appreciation of the donors who contributed monetary gifts to For the Bold, while explaining that this process of acceptance reflected a gatekeeper approach to student potential and ability. She noted that William & Mary must have seen potential in her studying at the elite institution, therefore she would continue pursuing her academic and professional goals. "I have to remember that I'll catch up to them one day," Caitlin said, referring to her peers at William & Mary. Notably, the campus culture and prestige appeared to provide a complex alignment with Caitlin's academic goals, and William & Mary's campaign represented the university's culture and prestige through its promotion.

Triadic Reciprocal Causation and Participant Responses

I coded each participant's responses to the virtual interviews into three categories, namely *Levels of Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Levels of Campaign Awareness,* and *Levels of Decisive*

Influence. I then searched for any evidence of how the implementation of the campaign possibly influenced the self-efficacy of FGS as they decided on academic majors and began to form career paths. I also noted any differences between male and female FGS participants. This approach enabled me to connect the findings from the group back to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and my adaptation of his model of triadic reciprocal causation. As well, I used Bronfenbrenner's (1993) developmental ecology model to frame the decisions of major selection within the cultural backgrounds and environmental settings of the FGS, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

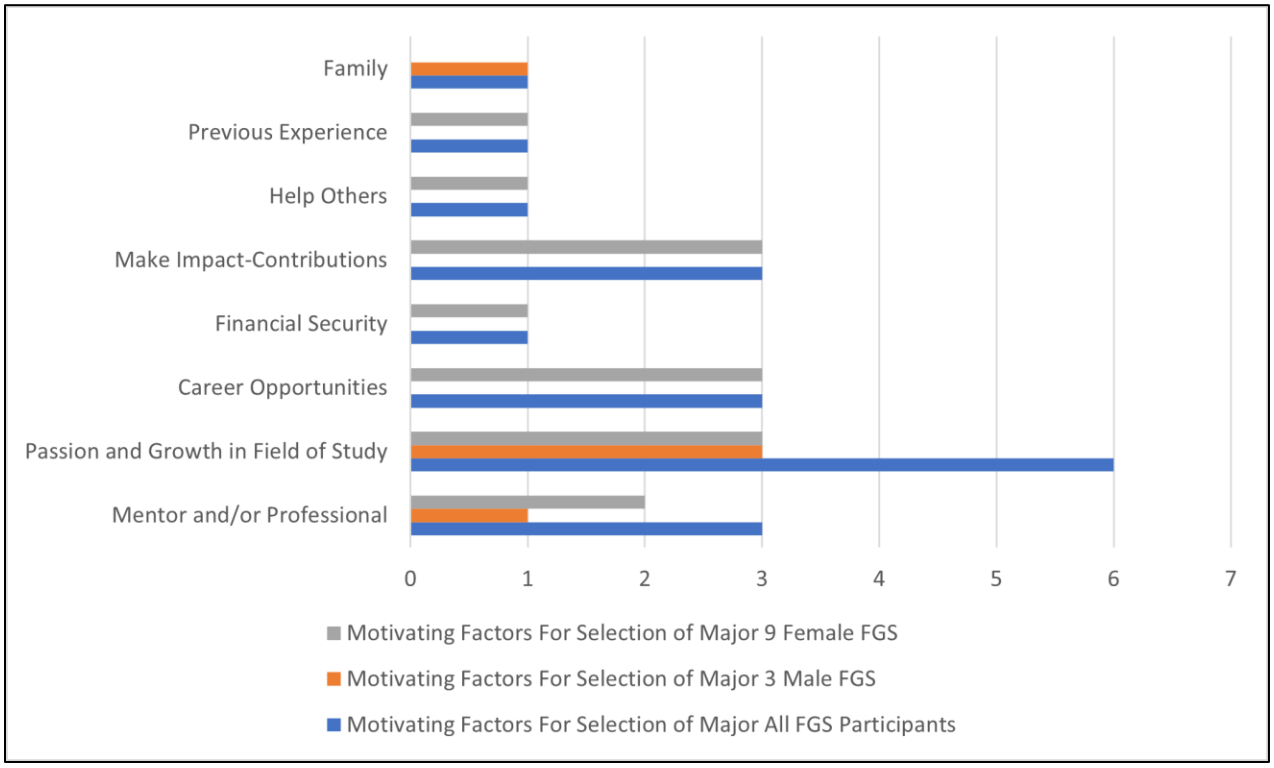
Levels of Self-Efficacy Beliefs. As a main focus in the case study, I asked a simple, direct question of each participant: "What is your selected major at William & Mary?" The response to this question provided a connection to additional interview questions that were designed to determine the participants' perceptions in their own abilities to complete their majors. Lastly, by starting with their selection, I gained indications of the participants' self-efficacy beliefs as they considered if the For the Bold campaign influenced their decision to select specific majors. In response, I learned that the participants possessed a variety of interests that led to the selection of majors ranging from biomedical engineering and computer science to law, physics, linguistics, and kinesiology. For example, Joe and Hannah said they traced their interests in their majors to high school programs, while Thomas dated his attraction to science back to his elementary education. Jane partly credited her gifted classes taken in elementary school for her selection, and Susan noted that her interest in other countries was evident at a young age, which led to the selection of international relations as her major. Six additional FGS participants stated that they had decided on their majors by the end of their freshman year.

Moreover, five out of the six students noted that their initial intentions and expectations of academic pursuit shifted during their freshman year at William & Mary.

Motivational Factors Driving FGS Participants. I also explored the self-efficacy levels of the 12 participants who were interviewed by asking the FGS to consider what motivational factors may have contributed to their decision to select their majors. Six of the FGS participants stated that their passion for the field of study directed them to select their majors, while mentors, career opportunities, and becoming active contributors in their professions also received frequent mention. As a group, the participants included financial security, previous field experience, family support, and helping others as motivating factors. Only one FGS participant, Thomas, mentioned family, but without naming specific family members, when asked directly about motivating factors leading to the selection of an academic major. Yet, throughout the interviews, six FGS shared that they received full parental/caregiver support regarding the choice of their selections, and eight students noted that peers encouraged their decision to select their majors. Figure 9 below highlights the motivating factors described by the 12 FGS, including motivating factors stated by gender.

Figure 9

Motivational Factors Leading to Selection of Major



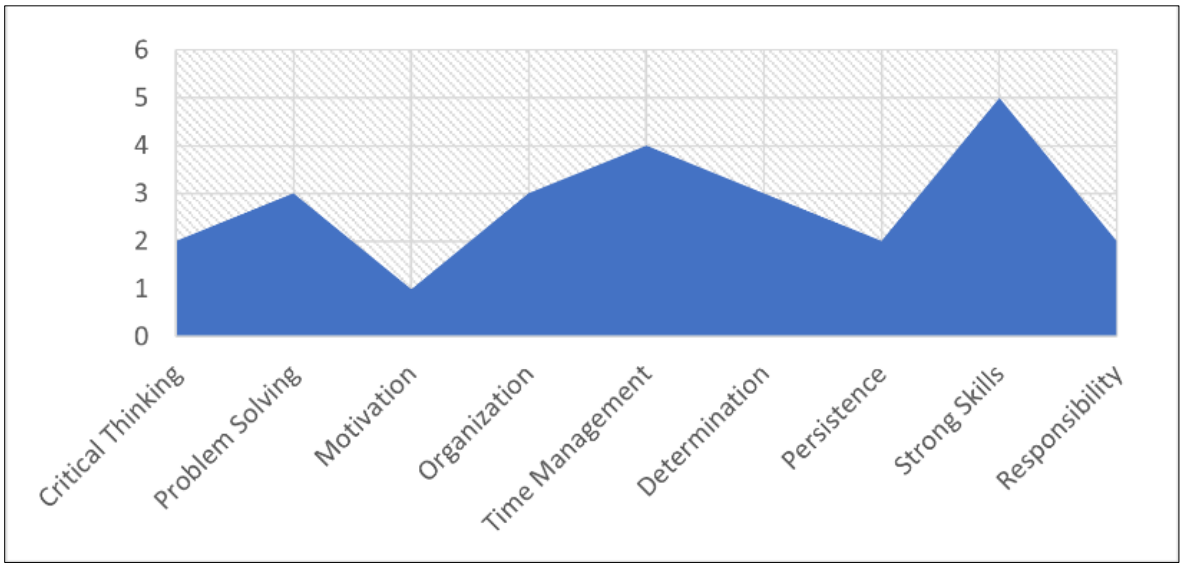
Note. The first-generation sophomores interviewed recognized the motivating factors above as strong determinants for selecting their academic majors.

Abilities to Succeed in Selected Fields. To examine closer the self-efficacy levels of the participants based on confidence in their own abilities, I asked the 12 FGS to consider what abilities were necessary to complete their selected degrees. The group placed skills, time management, and critical thinking as high-ranking abilities to succeed in their majors. Additionally, they included the ability to solve problems and to remain organized as essential skills to continue realizing their goals despite existing challenges and obstacles, as well as persistence, upholding responsibility, and motivation to pursue academic goals. Notably, when prompted in the virtual interviews, the mention of motivation by male and female FGS as a necessity to succeed academically was low compared to the other factors shared during the

virtual interviews. Spencer represented the one student who stated motivation when prompted by the interview question. Rather than motivation, determination was included as an ability to succeed by three women FGS, specifically Emily, Caitlin, and Hannah. Figure 10 below displays the variation of required abilities to succeed in their selected majors, as noted by the 12 participants.

Figure 10

Necessary Abilities to Succeed in Selected Major



Note. The first-generation sophomores interviewed recognized abilities necessary to complete their selected academic majors.

I also compared both the interview and survey responses from the 12 FGS as the participants reflected on managing and overcoming the challenges and demands connected to specific majors. By making this comparison, I discovered more defined levels of self-efficacy beliefs held by each of the 12 students as I considered similarities between the participant responses and the differences existing between their individual online survey and interview responses. For example, when answering the prompt, “I lack the special talents to follow my first

choice," which referred to their selected major, Hannah agreed, and Thomas and Susan strongly agreed. However, their individual survey responses differed from their own interview responses. For example, when interviewed, Thomas stated, "I'm getting the ability to do research with a professor. I can be a theorist in many different ways." Notably, the three FGS showed different levels of self-efficacy beliefs through the online survey, ranging from high to low, yet all three student participants expressed high levels of self-efficacy during their individual virtual interviews. Discussed below are additional findings that reflected self-efficacy belief levels of the 12 FGS, with the sub-sections categorized by gender.

Male FGS. Three of the 12 interviewees were men, and each male student selected a different academic major to pursue: Computer science, physics and quantum mechanics, and interdisciplinary studies. Computer science and physics/quantum mechanics have traditionally represented male-dominated majors. There was variability in when the men decided on their major, as one (Thomas) knew in elementary school that he wanted to major in a science field. Joe felt inspired to explore technological fields in high school, and he decided to select a major in computer science under the initial influence and the reassurance of ability and confidence through the messaging of For the Bold. Spencer made his decision during his freshmen year at William & Mary after first exploring a range of other pathways.

Additionally, I explored the factors that served as motivators and contributors behind their academic selections by recalling the online survey responses that reflected their self-efficacy beliefs in ability and confidence as FGS at William & Mary. The three males interviewed placed emphasis on family, passion/growth within their field of study, and support/influence from a mentor and/or professional in their field. However, their motivational factors may have conflicted with being easily distracted (1 strongly agreed, 2 somewhat agreed),

uncertainty of skills from year to year (2 strongly agreed, 1 somewhat agreed), and doubts of completing their education or training (2 strongly agreed, 1 somewhat agreed).

As shared in their virtual interviews, the men received support from their family, with Thomas noting significant support from his mother and siblings but resistance from his father regarding his choice of major. All three men felt their peers supported their choice of major. The male group listed leadership, strong work ethics, and imagination as abilities to succeeding in their selected majors, and all three believed they were "pretty confident" in their abilities to complete their selected major. Joe shared the level of commitment required to complete his major, stating, "Nothing worthwhile comes easy." Lastly, the three men noted that the choice of major aligned well with their personal and professional goals.

Female FGS. Similar to the male FGS group, eight of the nine women interviewed selected majors that represented a variety of interests, ranging from biomedical engineering and law to psychology and linguistics. Two women selected computer science as their majors at William & Mary, which traditionally has few women majoring in the field. Jane believed that her path toward biomedical engineering had been determined since primary school. Moreover, five female FGS decided on their majors during their first year. Angela shared, "I guess it was really right in front of me all along, and I just didn't realize it until this summer." Lisa represented the only FGS among the 12 who was still deciding on her selected major. Additionally, four of the nine women interviewed experienced a shift in their expectations and/or selection of their majors during their freshman year.

When asked about motivating factors and other contributing factors that may have led to the selection or possible selection of their majors, like the male FGS, the nine women noted mentors and passion in the field. Yet, unlike the men, Caitlin added financial security, Susan

noted the opportunity to make an impact, Hannah included the need for previous experience in a selected field, and Jane, Lisa, and Angela noted the chance to help others. However, the survey responses from the female FGS showed that two stated they strongly agreed, one agreed, and five somewhat agreed about becoming easily distracted during their time dedicated to coursework. Moreover, considering uncertainty in abilities from year to year, two of the nine strongly agreed, two agreed, and one somewhat agreed. Out of the female group, three strongly agreed, one agreed, and three somewhat agreed that they had doubts in completing their education or training.

When interviewed, the women did not list family influence as a motivating factor in selecting their majors, which differed from the male FGS group. Four out of nine women interviewed believed they received support from their parents or caregivers, whereas two stated they did not receive support. Additionally, one female FGS considered her parental/caregiver provided partial support, and the remaining two believed the support was neutral based on the understanding of higher education and selected field of study by their parents/caregivers. When asked about the level of support they received from their peers, three women FGS said their peers supported their decision on majors and two believed their peers did not support them. Caitlin shared her perspective on peer support when stating, “If you don’t like me, that’s not my business.” One female believed that she received partial support, one stated the question was not applicable to her, and two felt neutral on this question of support from peers.

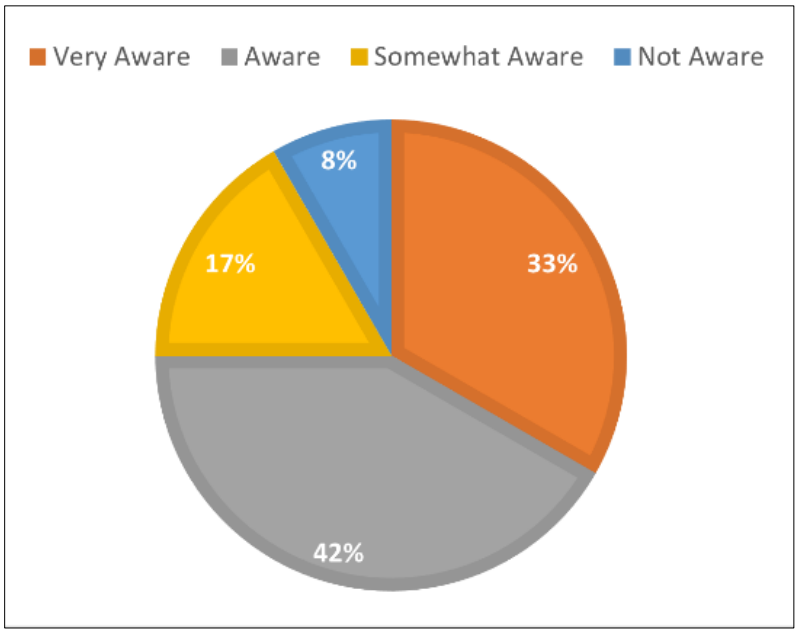
The women noted that the abilities necessary to successfully complete their selected majors included determination, courage, strong organizational skills, grit, and open-mindedness. They also stressed the ability to remain strong during professional challenges while remaining flexible at the same time. These identified skills differed from those shared by the men

interviewed (leadership, strong work ethic, and imagination). Additionally, when interviewed, the women expressed more confidence than the men in their abilities to succeed in their selected majors (3 = *very confident*; 1 = *confident*, 5 = *pretty confident*). The men FGS only expressed that they were "pretty confident" in their ability to succeed.

Levels of Campaign Awareness. Various levels of awareness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign existed among the 12 FGS participants: four participants said they were very aware, five participants were aware of the campaign's existence on campus, and two participants were somewhat aware. Only one student out of 12 (Thomas) shared that he was not aware of the $1 billion campaign (see Figure 11). Notably, the four FGS with high awareness of the campaign understood why funds were raised to support scholarships, and two had direct connections to the campaign. The students who knew the campaign had been implemented and the campaign goal met were often confused about the driving factors behind the campaign and how the money raised would benefit the campus or themselves.

Figure 11

Awareness of the For the Bold Campaign by 12 First-generation Sophomores at William & Mary



Note. The pie graph represents the awareness levels of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign as indicated by the first-generation sophomores interviewed.

Male FGS. Two out of the three male FGS indicated during their individual interviews that they held high awareness of the William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. Moreover, my findings showed that the male FGS associated the campaign with fundraising efforts to raise $1 billion, along with leadership and support in academic learning. Specifically, Joe explained that he was very aware due to the campaign's promotional tools applied. He commented, "I just took it for what I thought it meant and what interests I had for myself." This comment highlights how Joe tried to understand the connectivity between the campaign and his own needs as a FGS student belonging to an elite campus. Additionally, Spencer, who also seemed to be very aware of the campaign, responded more to the publicity of the campaign's outcome and decisions regarding fund distribution rather than the promotion of the campaign's message. Thomas was

unaware of the overall campaign goals and messaging until discussed during the virtual interview.

Female FGS. All nine women interviewed indicated some awareness of the For the Bold campaign, with two stating they were "very aware" and five believing they were "aware." Caitlin shared her strong awareness of the campaign by describing her indirect connection to For the Bold, stating, "I received support and was asked to send Thank You letters to them [For the Bold donors]. It makes me feel like a seal with a beach ball on my nose." The remaining two women were only somewhat aware of the campaign. Among the women, four participants stated they were knowledgeable of the specific mission driving the For the Bold campaign. Another two women noted they held knowledge of the campaign, but they were somewhat confused about the campaign's purpose. For example, Marissa reflected, "I see them asking for money a lot, but I don't know exactly what the plan is." Similar to the male FGS, female students associated the campaign with fundraising efforts and recognized the support directed to students, university alumni, and the overall campus environment at William & Mary.

Levels of Decisive Influence on Majors and Careers. When asked during the interview to describe their confidence in completing a selected major, three of the 12 FGS interviewed expressed that they were "very confident" in their academic abilities in relation to their selected majors. Moreover, when asked if the For the Bold campaign message influenced their confidence during their sophomore year (2020-2021), six of the 12 FGS participants believed the campaign message did influence their confidence levels, and two stated their confidence was influenced "somewhat" during the campaign. For example, Jane noted that the messaging did not influence her decision to select her major in biomedical engineering, yet she stated, "The connotation that I have about For the Bold is positive. It's a positive thing what William & Mary is trying to do by

raising money." Notably, as four of the 12 FGS said that the campaign offered no influence on their confidence levels, Susan still recognized the alumni's contributions and significant role played during the campaign's implementation, noting, "I've talked to a lot of alumni, and they've been very encouraging about being at William & Mary and my major." She also shared her belief that the university's alumni provided an impressive network of financial support to William & Mary students.

Also of importance to this case study is my finding that one of the FGS interviewed, Joe, believed the For the Bold campaign message provided some form of influence as he confirmed his decision of major and moved forward with professional planning. Joe stressed that the campaign message that highlighted a community on campus and a lifelong belonging to William and Mary offered the support and confidence necessary for him to move ahead with his selection of major. The campaign messaging also aligned with Joe's personal and professional goals, which included helping others and advancing as a leader within his chosen field. Notably, Joe referred to professional figures like Elon Musk as examples to follow, and he included critical thinking, problem solving, and leadership as necessary skills to succeed in his major and professional field, which mirror characteristics communicated in the For the Bold campaign messaging.

Male FGS. One out of the three male FGS, Joe, stated that William & Mary's overall messaging and implementation of the For the Bold campaign directly influenced his decision-making process regarding the selection of academic major. When asked if the campaign influenced confidence levels in progressing toward career goals and professional fields, which connects directly to their self-efficacy beliefs, both Joe and Spencer believed that William & Mary's For the Bold campaign did positively influence their confidence levels. As stated earlier

in this section, Thomas only became aware of the campaign during the virtual interview held for this case study in the Fall 2020 semester.

Female FGS. As discovered through the findings, Caitlin represented the only FGS female out of nine who believed the implementation of the For the Bold campaign had indirectly influenced her decision to select computer science and studio art as her double major, based on the campaign's support for scholarship and for students in need of financial assistance. Recognizing the financial assistance and academic opportunity from William & Mary, Caitlin shared her intentions of applying her double major and knowledge gained to eventually work for the global company Pixar Animation Studios (2021), which was founded by five men including Steve Jobs. Notably, Caitlin stated that she was well aware of her selection of a male-dominated field but felt confident in her decision.

When answering the interview question, three FGS females summed up their response as "not really," and four noted that their decision to select their academic major remained independent of William & Mary's campaign. Nonetheless, Susan stated, "I know that the school [W&M] will probably have my back from the money raised by For the Bold." Lisa had yet to select her major. However, she noted that although she was aware of the For the Bold message, she did not feel influenced by the campaign as she prepared to make her decision.

Selection of Traditionally-gendered Majors and Careers

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory claims that to move forward in a selected field, one must hold the ability to produce long-term contributions that allow for growth on both individual and professional levels. To answer the subset question "Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores," I considered the findings that centered on the selection of majors made by each of the 12 FGS to determine if their selection reflected

traditionally-gendered majors and to identify what influences led them to select their majors. This analysis included any references to the campaign message as possible influence, as discussed in the following sections below.

Alignment of Traditionally-gendered Majors

Among the three male FGS interviewed, two students selected male-dominated traditional fields, specifically physics/quantum mechanics and computer science. Joe explained that he found a balance of interest and skill once he decided to select computer science as his major, stating, "I still wanted to pursue my passion of software engineering and business, so it was like an intersection of the two." Spencer opted for interdisciplinary studies to meet several academic interests, which falls outside of the traditionally-gendered majors selected by male students. When asked how well their major selections aligned with their personal goals, both Spencer and Thomas indicated the alignment as very well, and Joe explained that the selection was a good match, or well, when considering his personal goals.

Additionally, my findings from the nine female FGS interviewed showed a variation of traditional and non-traditional major alignment. The women's selection of majors ranged from non-traditional options for women as evidenced by Jane's choice of biomedical engineering, Emily's decision to pursue environmental policy and law, Kim's selection of the field of kinesiology, and both Caitlin and Marissa's commitment to computer science. Five of the nine women in the study selected non-traditional majors as compared to traditional academic fields frequently selected by female students. Hannah's decision to follow a major in psychology, Angela's selection of linguistics, and Susan's decision to pursue international relations reflected more traditional fields for women in the group. Lisa was considering either kinesiology or biology as a possible major. Altogether, the women felt their academic majors aligned very well

(5) or well (4) with their personal goals. The women participating in this study equally sought out traditionally male-dominated fields relative to female aligned majors.

Continuing further exploration of male and female selection of major among the 12 participants, my case study findings showed an awareness of gender expectations for choice of academic fields among the women in the group. Evidence of this awareness was communicated through female FGS like Caitlin who stated that as a computer science/studio art double major, she believed that she was a "young woman surrounded by men," due to her non-traditional background and academic persistence. Additionally, Jane filled non-traditional roles outside of higher education as a firefighter before pursuing her academic major and possible career. She believed that her choice of major in biomedical engineering suited her interests in both engineering and chemistry, despite her selection leading toward a male-dominated profession.

Alignment of Traditionally-gendered Careers

My findings showed variability when concentrating on the selection of traditionally-gendered majors among the male and female FGS. However, regardless of selected majors, my findings showed little evidence of the 12 participants pursuing traditionally-gendered careers as they shared their professional goals and expectations. For example, Caitlin stated, "My dream is to work at Pixar." Her selection and designated profession leading to Pixar Animation Studios reflect Caitlin's own confidence in her abilities to explore and complete a non-traditional major and to follow a non-traditional career path. Focusing specifically on the one FGS who felt directly influenced by William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, Joe selected a male-dominated field of computer science as his major. Yet, he explained that his decision provided him with the opportunity to develop transitional skills that will align with a variety of professions, which reflects a desire to explore options that may fall outside of traditionally-gendered careers.

Notably, his willingness to discover unknown possibilities aligns with the goals and representation of William & Mary's campus culture.

Moreover, when the 12 FGS participants were asked how well their major selections aligned with their professional goals, four indicated very well, while six indicated that their decision matched well. This tally included Lisa who had not decided between kinesiology and biology, but she felt confident that her choice would align with her professional goals. Jane and Susan both shared that they were unsure about how their major (biomedical engineering and international relations) would align with their professional goals as they had not fully formed their career paths at the time of the interviews.

Other Factors Influencing the Selection of Majors and Formation of Career Paths

Even though a focus of this research was based on determining the influence of the For the Bold campaign on students' self-efficacy and choice of academic major in their sophomore year, the findings showed scant evidence of campaign influence on decision-making for selecting a major among the FGS interviewed for this study. Instead, other factors seemed more influential, namely pre-college influence on the selection of a major, exploration of course work in their first year, and the financial stability offered by the career options open after graduating in the selected major. Importantly, a passion for the topic motivated most in their decision of which major to pursue.

Unlike the five FGS participants interviewed who arrived at William & Mary with their academic major determined, another six FGS participants finalized their decision during their freshman year at the university. Caitlin, for example, noted that she held a passion for art prior to beginning her undergraduate studies, yet she stated, "I had no expectations in my freshman year of college." The FGS explained. "I showed up, and I was happy with that." However, through

the impression of one professor and the professor's instruction of a computer class at William & Mary during her first year, Caitlin selected a double major that combined both studio art and computer science. She also indicated that her academic background may have differed from her peers who possibly realized their passion for computer science as early as high school, stressing that students within the field also had parents who had earned Ph.D. degrees. "I don't have that pressure to follow in the path of my parents," she stated. Additionally, Spencer shared that by taking several courses at William & Mary and allowing time to develop his strengths, he found a working balance in his selection of interdisciplinary studies, which he believes will lead to greater career choices following graduation.

Summary

This study explored the influence of William & Mary's campaign on the self-efficacy beliefs of the institution's FGS enrolled during the Fall 2020 semester. Notably, campus community and a sense of boldness helped frame William & Mary's campaign message, which was successful at raising more than $1 billion to continue to provide scholarships, leadership, and community regardless of the challenges presented by the pandemic. During the interviews with the selected 12 FGS participants, I was able to query how the campaign influenced their decision-making and to determine if levels of their self-efficacy beliefs were influenced as the FGS selected their majors.

The findings showed that as the 12 interviewees were preparing to select their academic majors, 11 recalled an awareness of the For the Bold messaging. One male FGS (Joe) explained that William & Mary offered such an appealing message that he made the decision to seek his undergraduate studies from the university. Two female FGS also stated that they connected their awareness of the message to their involvement with the For the Bold campaign during their

enrollment at the university. Despite the heightened awareness of the campaign, it had limited influence on the selection of academic majors or career paths of the 12 FGS.

One male FGS, Joe, stated that he felt the campaign's messaging influenced his self-efficacy and made him feel confident in his decision to pursue a major in computer science. Not only did he share high awareness of the campaign, Joe referenced unity and community. One female FGS, Caitlin, was not recognized as being directly influenced by the campaign through her self-efficacy beliefs, yet she credited the campaign's effort to provide financial assistance as an indirect influence on the selection of her double major of computer science and studio art. Other interviewed participants recognized motivating factors like passion for their fields, which offered a more direct academic influence. Lastly, several FGS indicated that establishing financial security and directing their ability to help others provided them with the motivation necessary to select their fields of study.

In Chapter 5, I consider how the findings from the online survey and the individual virtual interviews aligned with previous literature and discoveries from well-established research based on studies of first-generation college students, the second-year college experience, self-efficacy, as well as the practice of institutional branding. My findings, stemming from 42 FGS and then specifically 12 students from the larger group, answered my case study's two research questions while also highlighting significant student behaviors and decisive outcomes that challenge findings from previous literature. When detailing the implications for theory and practice, I recognize the differences between the FGS at William & Mary and other first-generation students discussed in previous studies, and I point to their persistence, direction, and drive, which serve as representation of a campus culture long established prior to the launch of the For the Bold campaign.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This case study used a response-centered analysis that sought to determine if the implementation of the William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influenced the self-efficacy beliefs of a group of first-generation sophomores (FGS) at William & Mary as they selected their majors and developed their career goals. Based on the purpose of the case study, I first collected and then analyzed the responses to an online survey from 42 of William & Mary's 149 enrolled FGS in the Fall 2020 semester. I then held individual virtual interviews with 12 FGS participants rather than in-person interviews due to limitations presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and an adaptation of his triadic reciprocal causation model (TRC; see Figure 3 in Chapter 2, p. 26) served as the theoretical framework that guided the data coding. Moreover, the analysis helped in building a model to help trace the progression of possible influence, if any, on the high and low self-efficacy belief levels of the 12 FGS during their selection of majors and formation of professional paths.

In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4, which connect the online survey responses and virtual interviews with the research questions driving the case study. Notably, my findings described in Chapter 4 offered examples of scholarly motivation and engagement among the case study participants. This became more evident through cross-referencing the levels of ability and confidence of the 12 participants with William & Mary's implementation of the message across campus. In analyzing the findings from the survey and virtual interviews, I remained aware that Bandura's (1986) theory recognized that an individual's perceived self-efficacy beliefs are partly determined by his/her own external

surroundings. This case study sought to answer the two main research questions that guided the research:

1. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy of first-generation sophomores?
    a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major?
    b. Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?
2. How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals?
    a. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals?
    b. Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?

I also provide sections that explore the implications for theory and practice, as well as areas of future research. Pointing to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and the adaptation of his TRC model of personal, environmental, and behavioral determinants, I describe how the messaging aligned with specific factors stemming from the individual experiences of the 12 FGS interviewed, which will be discussed in detail throughout Chapter 5.

Interpretation of the Findings

The For the Bold campaign succeeded in positioning William & Mary as the top public university for alumni engagement, raising $303 million for academic scholarships (Wall, 2020), yet my case study findings showed that the campaign's influence on the self-efficacy beliefs of 12 FGS participants interviewed was minimal. The analysis of self-efficacy beliefs collected from the perspectives of the 12 FGS gained during the implementation of the university's

historic campaign offered evidence that the FGS participants had made critical academic and professional decisions without previous background connected to higher education and with minimal influence from For the Bold messaging on those decisions. Key discoveries within my case study, from both the online survey and the virtual interviews, differed from previous research on first-generation college students and the possible adjustments required to join a college community. Namely, the experiences of my case study participants differed from prior research in their successful adaptability to a college environment, particularly the elite campus setting of William & Mary, despite arriving as first-generation students. Notably, some participants in my study managed self-doubt, but they also expressed the persistence necessary to complete their selected majors and shared a variety of internal motivators, which did not include their parents, as they pursued their academic and professional goals.

A Bold Campus Climate

Academic identities are formed partly due to strategic communication shared with targeted audiences, as with the For the Bold campaign and its connection with students across campus (Newman et al., 2004). For 5 consecutive years, William & Mary used banners, posters, emails, speeches, and videos to distribute a "Bold" message and to reach out to specific targeted audiences to raise $1 billion in support of the institution's vision. Running parallel to the campaign's mission, the university's vice president of advancement, Matthew Lambert, stated in 2015 (as cited in Advancement Staff, 2015, para. 18) that, "William & Mary can continue to flourish and build on its tradition of attracting the greatest minds that have a long and bold track record of making the remarkable and a passion for impact." Notably, this study supports the claim that students may achieve success when they strengthen their cognitive development while controlling their motivational, social, and affective factors within their environment (Bandura,

1993). The For the Bold campaign capitalized on strengths evident on campus, including the central role of academics for students, with an expectation of the students attending that William & Mary would offer a rigor in degree programs, an emphasis on engagement, and opportunities for service (William & Mary, 2020a).

Awareness of William & Mary's Campaign Message

Based on the findings of this case study, 11 of the 12 FGS interviewees stated they were aware of the For the Bold campaign. The 11 FGS interviewed also held a common perception that For the Bold's efforts and drive centered mainly on raising money for student support, professional leadership, and civic engagement. My findings showed that the male FGS associated the campaign with fundraising efforts to raise $1 billion, along with leadership and support in academic learning. The female students interviewed connected For the Bold with money, yet they also linked the campaign to the outcome resulting from the distribution of the raised funds, such as providing scholarships, expansion on campus, and building strong relationships with William & Mary alumni. However, only one male FGS (Joe) believed that his knowledge of the campaign and the campaign's message confirmed his initial intentions of selection of major and/or career choice in the field of computer science.

Joining the Bold Community. When conducting the 12 individual interviews included in my case study, the FGS shared a sense of pride that centered on their academic achievement leading them to the opportunity to study at William & Mary and their belonging to the Tribe community. One participant, Jane, knew the campaign was occurring on campus due to the presence of promotional materials. This awareness may have informed her perception of the university's environment as a place of high achievement (Judson et al., 2006). Pointedly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my case study participants experienced William & Mary's campus

climate for only part of their first year. In their sophomore year, which began in the fall of 2020, the FGS participated in hybrid or online coursework. Notably, the For the Bold campaign surpassed its $1 billion fundraising goal and concluded at the end of June of 2020. Thus, a mediated awareness of the campus climate occurred for a significant amount of their time on campus given the shift to remote learning.

Caitlin, who stated that the For the Bold campaign indirectly influenced her decision to select a double major in computer science and studio art, explained that she experienced pressure to compete with the academic performances of her fellow students majoring in the same fields. She described a strategy and willingness to "take punches and get back up again," which reflected resiliency during this transition to move forward within her designated track of study. Caitlin indicated a varied range of self-efficacy beliefs through her online survey responses and clear self-doubt during her virtual interview. However, she also believed that some of her peers felt jealous of her academic experiences as she described her ability to succeed in male-dominated courses and to progress in the challenging field of computer science despite her personal background that included a small-town community environment and a reliance on financial assistance.

Moreover, Susan, another FGS participant, connected her awareness of the campaign to her financial standing. "I only really know about the scholarship aspect, which is really important to me as a low-income student." For Susan, who showed low levels of self-efficacy beliefs through her survey responses and high levels when interviewed, she shared that the awareness of the For the Bold messaging translated into the opportunity to join William & Mary's community regardless of personal financial limitations. Notably, Susan expressed confidence about her decision to major in international relations, yet her choice represented a more traditional field for

female students. Comparably, when considering the two academic paths and professional possibilities for both Susan and Caitlin, Caitlin explored fields beyond her comfort level, which may have tested her ability and confidence more so than Susan.

Academic Decisiveness by FGS. As I focused on the influence and motivation leading up to the selection of majors and career paths of the 12 FGS based on their levels of self-efficacy, I found that the data collected from the interviews differed from the findings of Terenzini and colleagues (1996). Their well-established research states that first-generation students faced a higher probability of entering college without the awareness of resources available to earn a selected degree nor the reassurance from family members who have already experienced this transition. My data analysis discovered indications of a clear sense of direction and decisiveness by the FGS participants.

Specifically, the findings showed that five of the FGS interviewed arrived at William & Mary with a determined major, and they did not recall any shifting in their decisions regarding their selection during the first two years at the university despite the implemented promotion of the For the Bold campaign. Additionally, out of the five FGS, only two (Thomas and Jane) indicated high levels of self-efficacy beliefs in the online survey. A third (Joe) showed middle-ranged levels, one FGS (Hannah) indicated varied levels, and one student (Susan) indicated low levels of beliefs. Moreover, another six had selected their majors during their first year. My discovery made from the findings may serve as a source of interest for other researchers who focus their studies on first-generation college students.

It is important to note that the online survey responses from my case study showed that maintaining a strong drive to complete assignments and realizing academic goals would sometimes occur simultaneously with distractions and feelings of self-doubt. Out of the 42 FGS

survey participants, 16 somewhat agreed that they were often distracted from their academic responsibilities, while nine FGS strongly agreed and seven agreed. Three of every four survey respondents (76%) noted periods of distraction. It is important to remember that at the time of the survey, the students had been away from campus for half of the spring semester, and, when the survey was distributed in Fall 2020, some were still engaging remotely and others in starkly different ways than a normal semester. Despite the level of distraction evidenced in part due to the pandemic, 14 FGS stated they somewhat agreed that they were uncertain about completing their educational training, with six students responding they strongly agreed and seven students responding that they agreed. The other 67% felt certain about completing their degree programs.

Parental Support for FGS' Decisions. This case study considered the research from Terenzini and colleagues (1996) that stressed that first-generation students may be at a disadvantage when making significant decisions that shape their academic paths due to their families' limited experiences and knowledge of higher education. I remained aware of Terenzini et al.'s (1996) findings that suggest the possible existence of challenges for first-generation college students as they choose academic tracks and form career goals without parental guidance. Notably, I focused specifically on parental support during the individual interviews, and five out of nine females stated their parents and/or caregivers failed to support their decision to pursue a selected major, distanced themselves from the process, or could not relate to academic demands. One male participant (Spencer) recalled that his parents supported him despite their full understanding of his selected major. Important to my case study findings is the discovery that only one participant (Thomas) included a parent or family member as a key motivator driving his academic decisions centered on fields of study and professions. Thus, like prior research, I found that my participants' parents had a limited role in the process of making academic decisions.

Other Influential Support. When considering other levels of academic support for the selection of academic major, particularly throughout the For the Bold campaign messaging, I discovered that my online survey results differed from Terenzini and colleagues' (1996) findings. One survey prompt out of 14 showed that strong levels of support were indicated as each FGS participant pursued his/her academic goals during the Fall 2020 semester. Considering all 42 students who responded to the survey, 40% strongly disagreed with the survey statement, "*An influential person in my life does not approve of my vocational choice*," and 24% of FGS disagreed. Only 2% strongly agreed with the statement and no students indicated that they agreed. Notably, this influential person referenced in the statement may or may not be a parent of a FGS. When singling out the survey responses received to that of the 12 FGS who also participated in individual virtual interviews, six of the participants also strongly disagreed that they lacked support on their choice of their major, highlighting that the participants in this study felt they had support in their academic pursuits, which refutes the research produced by Terenzini and colleagues (1996).

Motivation for Choice of Major and Career Formation of FGS

My case study findings support portions of research from Blackwell and Pinder (2014) as they explored what factors motivated first-generation students when they attempted to complete their degrees. Their study recognized that the students who participated in semi-structured interviews did not all react to the same motivating factors, regardless of socio-economic status or other influential impacts. I found that my 12 FGS participants were motivated too by a range of factors (e.g., passion for the topic, mentors). When directly asked the question, "Describe at least two motivating factors leading to the selection of your academic discipline," only Caitlin

referenced a motivation of financial security. However, three FGS (Thomas, Kim, and Marissa) among the 12 included the importance of financial security throughout their interviews.

When I asked what factors motivated each FGS participant in my study to select their majors, their responses also differed by gender. The three FGS males in this study included academic and professional mentors and passion as motivating factors for their selection of academic fields. Yet, the female FGS recognized mentors and passion, along with previous field experience, career opportunities, financial security, and the ability to help others as motivation to complete their selected disciplines. For example, Caitlin included financial gain to her reason for pursuing computer science and studio art, and Marissa noted career options following graduation as a key motivating factor when selecting her major in computer and data science.

Similarly, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) discovered that the first-generation students from their research linked their capabilities to sources of internalized motivation, while categorizing the support offered from parents and peers as external motivators. Notably, the results of my findings, compared to the research from Blackwell and Pinder (2014) and Terenzini et al. (1996), support their research findings. Only one FGS participant, Thomas, out of the 12 students interviewed in my case study, stated that family, notably his mother, represented a source of internal motivation when selecting the academic discipline of physics and quantum mechanics. Eleven FGS from my study made significant academic decisions without a parental figure serving as an internal motivational influence.

However, based on the claims by Terenzini et al. (1996), first-generation college students may lack direction without parental support or without a parent who holds some form of academic experience within higher education. Additionally, Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) findings recognized challenges of confidence and adapting to a university environment among

first-generation college students as these students linked their capabilities to internal motivators, which did not include parents. When considering Blackwell and Pinder's (2014) findings regarding strategic internal and external motivation by first-generation students and the conclusions from Terenzini et al. (1996), does the combined research suggest that first-generation students may lack academic direction and awareness of the college experience if they do not include parents as motivators? If so, my findings indicate that this conclusion is false. Eleven of the 12 FGS participants from my case study did not recognize their parents as a source of motivation, yet they were driven in their academic decisions, and the vast majority selected their major prior to the typical time of sophomore year. Their decisions reflected a confidence in their ability to complete their degree.

In addition, I acknowledged the findings stemming from my interview question that focused directly on parental support, not motivational support or influence, as it referred to the selection of major. My case study findings showed that six FGS (Joe, Jane, Susan, Hannah, Lisa, and Spencer) felt fully supported by their parents/caregivers. Thomas, referenced earlier, shared details about his mother offering full support whereas his father discouraged him from pursuing a college degree. Emily also stated experiencing partial parental support. Moreover, one student (Caitlin) explained that her parents took a "hands off" approach, while another FGS (Marissa) believed that her parents were "neutral" about her selection. One FGS (Kim) shared that her parents did not provide support based on their unfamiliarity of higher education and her selected degree, and another student (Angela) believed that her parents showed no support following her selection of academic major.

The Sophomore Experience for FGS Participants

As this case study focused solely on first-generation sophomores, it is also necessary to recognize the students' second-year perspective. My findings showed a variation of student success and challenges as the 12 FGS interviewed recalled their experiences of enrolling in courses during their freshmen and sophomore years and their attempt to match their skills and interests with majors and potential careers. Notably, the sophomore experience for all participants in this case study developed under the significant adjustments made across campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The literature from Gahagan and Hunter (2006) suggested that the college sophomore experience was comparable to that of a middle sibling, in which second-year students may be overshadowed as attention is placed on incoming freshmen, promising juniors, and graduating seniors. The literature also highlighted that as second-year college students placed more emphasis on developing their own values, building relationships with peers, and selecting suitable fields of study, they also displayed a pattern of "enrolling in gateway classes, such as sequences of math and chemistry, which are traditionally where academically less prepared students are 'weeded out'" (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 20). Considering the existing literature included in this case study, my findings stemming from specific sophomore experiences from both male and female perspectives provide a deeper context and may encourage further research on self-efficacy, institutional branding, and FGS.

Sophomore Experience (Male FGS). Thomas, who indicated a high level of self-efficacy beliefs on both the survey and in his virtual interview, selected physics and quantum mechanics as his major and noted that he was positive of his selection of major from as early as elementary school. Moreover, based on his interview, Thomas had not experienced sophomore-

related challenges tied to content and curriculum. On the contrary, he described his freshman and sophomore experience as being directed by one professor, in particular, who served as a mentor and inspiration in the field of physics and quantum mechanics. When Thomas learned about the For the Bold campaign during the interview, he considered the academic experience he had with his professor and felt the campaign messaging would align with the support he felt.

Sophomore Experience (Female FGS). Angela, who indicated a varied level of self-efficacy beliefs, stated that she had explored several fields of study before eventually selecting linguistics as her major. During her interview, Angela explained that she felt alienated and confused about connecting her future with a suitable field of study in her freshman year. Yet, Angela was not "weeded out," and she received guidance and support from a William & Mary counselor to manage her self-doubt and ability to succeed as a sophomore. Her experience hinted at similarities described through the findings of Gahagan and Hunter (2006) that students in their sophomore year may feel overlooked on campus, similar to that of middle siblings in a family setting. Yet, Angela indicated an ability to continue pursuing her academic goals with confidence and with backing from William & Mary.

In addition to Gahagan and Hunter's (2006) research, I recognized Webb and Cotton's (2019) comparison study of undergraduates and the participants' perceptions of journeying through the "sophomore slump" (p. 173). They claimed, "The data offered no evidence that social and academic engagement are mutually exclusive" (p. 184). Webb and Cotton's findings suggested that "significant changes" (p.183) occurred for undergraduates during their sophomore year, mostly positive, which involved social interaction and a growing sense of self-worth on campus. No student interviewees who participated in my case study expressed challenges or behaviors that indicated a sophomore slump (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Webb & Cotton, 2019).

Bold Expectations of Major Selection and Professions

Understanding the role that branding plays in the growth and reputation of an institution remains crucial in the heavily competitive field of higher education (Newman et al., 2004). When the branding is successful, the outcome offers leverage regarding recruitment and retention of students that is matched with a heightened financial gain and a marketable product: a superior college education (Chapelo, 2015). The For the Bold campaign messaging emphasized the value of earning a degree from William & Mary, and, through campaign speeches and promotional material, the university shared possible outcomes that may result from a bold approach to learning (William & Mary, 2020a). My data collection and analysis partly focused on the impact of this messaging on student self-efficacy as FGS participants determined fields of study and career paths that may not have aligned with traditionally-gendered academic options.

Academic Planning by FGS Participants. Erlich and Russ-Eft's (2011) research focused on the correlation between confidence levels and academic planning among college students, as well as the ability for self-efficacy beliefs to serve as a predictor of shifting behavior regarding academic planning. Their study explained that the expectations of outcomes developed through academic planning, which then directed students toward the planning of professional goals including desired incomes and personal fulfillment (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Several examples from my study align with these findings, including Susan's expectations of joining numerous foreign communities and entering the field of international relations through the opportunity of scholarly exploration. "Once I started taking a class or two under the discipline, I was, like, yeah, this is what I want to do." Based on the interviews, once the participants had some experience in different areas of potential study, they grew more confident in their major selections and the possible career outcomes based on their selections.

Alignment of Traditionally-gendered Majors for FGS. Considering the selections of majors among the 12 FGS, I discovered that my findings stemming from the individual virtual interviews differed from previous research that highlighted patterns of choice made by female students, particularly the selection of disciplines that offer less income and growth potential (Johnson & Muse, 2017). Johnson and Muse (2017) recognized that even though women in college enroll, persist, and graduate at rates higher than men, they frequently pursue degrees and career paths in traditional fields like teaching and nursing while avoiding the possibility of entering more male-dominated fields. The researchers explored possible contributing factors that explain why women decide not to follow more male-dominated tracks, such as academic performance, socio-economic standings, engagement outside of the classroom, and, most significant to this case study, their self-efficacy beliefs regarding academic confidence and ability.

Johnson and Muse (2017) found that first-generation female students displayed a lower probability of choosing academic majors that best matched their abilities than first-generation male students. The participants in my individual interviews described how their pursuit of both traditional and non-traditional majors was instead based on passion and talent versus gender. My findings indicated that five out of the nine women (Jane, Emily, Caitlin, Kim, and Marissa) pursued non-traditional majors and were planning non-traditional careers. Three women (Susan, Hannah, and Angela) selected more traditional gender-oriented options. One female FGS (Lisa) was still deciding on a major but considering biology or kinesiology.

Alignment of Traditionally-gendered Careers for FGS. Foster's (2017) literature recognized that college sophomores dedicate more time planning their professional pursuits than those students categorized in freshmen, junior, or senior academic years. Her research suggested

that second-year students appreciated the opportunity to explore degree options before making selections within specific fields of study and practice (Foster, 2017). Notably, For the Bold's campaign promoted a campus culture where "opportunities and enriching experiences are available for all of our exceptional people" (University Advancement Staff, 2020, para. 1). The findings taken from my online survey of 42 FGS showed that 60% felt certain about their choice of major. Yet, in responding to the statement, "I am uncertain about the occupation I would enjoy," seven FGS strongly agreed, eight agreed, and 10 somewhat agreed (total 40%), which challenges the findings of Foster's (2017) research and the messaging from the For the Bold campaign. Focusing specifically on one of the 12 FGS interviewed, Jane, who held high levels of self-efficacy, acknowledged support from her grandfather, peers, and academic mentorship, but she continued to question if her decision to follow the field of biomedical engineering was the right decision.

Considering any evidence of an existing sophomore slump in motivation or guidance that sophomores, in general, may experience, my findings taken from the 12 FGS interviewees showed that six FGS believed that their sophomore year had led them to the best selection for a major and career path. The three male students within the group credited William & Mary's courses and professors for shaping the direction of their next two years before graduation. Three female students shared that they experienced some fear about reaching graduation, but they believed that they needed to keep moving forward. The responses from the interviews offer new findings that differ from familiar research like that of Gahagan and Hunter (2006) on the challenges faced by sophomores as they develop academically and form professional goals.

Implications for Theory and Research

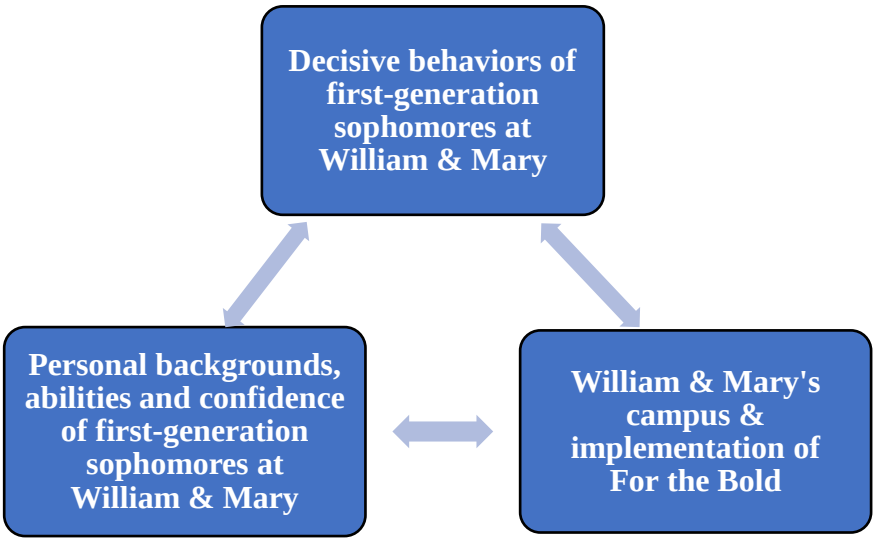
Bandura's (1986) model of TRC directed my data analysis of self-efficacy beliefs through the consideration of three determinants, including personal ability and emotional stability, environmental influences, and behavioral actions and decisions, as found within the 12 FGS interviews. Notably, Bandura (1986) suggested that a dominant determinant may surface through this triangulation of the TRC model, which I expected would indicate points of alignment with William & Mary's For the Bold campaign for the FGS participants. This process of discovering a dominant determinant of influence on the development of self-efficacy beliefs searches further into a participant's background and current environmental setting, which allows researchers to take their collected data from first-hand question and answer sessions to a deeper level of analysis on decisive behavior. For the purpose of this study, I used an adaptation of Bandura's model to narrow in on the participants' awareness and understanding of the campaign message and to highlight any influence on their self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the implementation of For the Bold.

Adaptation of Bandura's TRC Model

As part of the discussion in this chapter, I applied my findings taken from Phase 2 of this case study's data collection to an adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC (see Figure 4), which I customized to triangulate personal backgrounds and competencies of the interview participants, the campus environment experienced by the FGS during the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign, and, finally, the decisive behaviors leading up to their selection of academic majors and career paths by the FGS at that time. As I searched for possible determinants through the adaptation, I remained aware that an individual's pattern of thought and emotional reactions is tied to the belief in one's capability (Bandura, 1986).

Figure 4

Adaptation of Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model



Note. This case study adapted Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation (TRC) model to highlight a dominant determinant of influence on self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores at William & Mary.

The expected outcome of my adapted model of TRC centered on the discovery of one dominant determinant among three, which may be used to indicate how and when the campaign message successfully reached each FGS. To assist in applying my adaptation of Bandura's (1986) causal model, I also relied on a contextual framework referenced in Chapter 1. The contextual categories of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) developmental ecology model (including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems) complemented my adaptation for this case study, which allowed for a more precise tracing of how William & Mary's For the Bold environment may have shaped the self-efficacy beliefs of the 12 FGS.

TRC Adaptation Applied to Four FGS Participants

To provide specific examples of personal backgrounds and influences, environmental influences, and decisive behaviors, I selected a smaller group of four FGS from the 12 FGS to include in the triangulation of the adapted TRC model and to provide a comparison of the four

FGS based on the findings. I intentionally chose a male (Thomas) FGS and female (Jane) FGS who indicated higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs in the online survey and a male (Spencer) FGS and female (Susan) FGS who indicated lower levels of self-efficacy beliefs in the online survey to consider the possibility of influence from William & Mary's campaign message. My selection of students also represented a variety of academic majors and interests coupled with different levels of perceived ability and confidence among the four FGS participants as shared in the virtual interviews.

Upon completion of this process, I discovered that all four participants indicated that their personal backgrounds and abilities served as the dominant determinant, which led to their selection of majors and formation of professional paths while developing among the *Tribe's* campus environment and their own decisive behavior. The campus environment at William & Mary and decisive behavior of the four FGS proved to be strong influences within the adapted model of TRC, yet those determinants were significantly driven by their personal backgrounds and abilities. Notably, Bandura (1986) highlights that no amount of persuasion will produce positive outcomes under a false sense of capability and a lack of persistence.

Personal Backgrounds and Abilities of FGS. When applying Bandura's (1986) adapted TRC model, I considered factors that included the FGS' backgrounds prior to their sophomore year at William & Mary, support from their parents and peers, stability from their financial standing, chosen mentors and drivers, as well as the variation of self-efficacy levels recorded by the four FGS' online survey responses and interviews. Secondly, I included Bronfenbrenner's (1993) first contextual category in his model, referred to as microsystems, to consider each student's persistence and confidence leading up to the point of critical decision-making. Additionally, I included a combination of microsystems for consideration, mainly parental and

peer relationships of each FGS, which Bronfenbrenner called mesosystems or his second contextual category (Paat, 2013).

Jane stated that the support from her grandfather helped provide a secure setting leading up to college enrollment. Additionally, her desire to take on challenges that provide service, like working as a firefighter while still in high school, heavily influenced her confidence level and ability to make sound decisions. Susan shared high interest in exploration, specifically traveling and becoming more familiar with other languages and economic structures outside of the United States. Her personal and professional drive in the field of international relations was complemented by her feelings of gratitude to be among the William & Mary community and to enjoy the campus experience. Thus, even with a lower self-efficacy level that was self-reported through the online survey, Susan felt confident that she belonged on campus and was capable of meeting academic standards.

Thomas's personal background included supportive family and peers coupled with the lack of support by a significant family figure and his management of depression. As he shared, despite his mother's full support, his father refused to embrace Thomas's desire to earn a degree in physics and quantum mechanics. Yet, his peers provided him with books and necessary materials to gain knowledge in the two fields, which provided a successful balance. Lastly, Spencer appreciated the support from his parents and peers as he prepared for the demands of academic advancement. He believed that his personal background and abilities stemmed from developing in a positive environment with parents who were unfamiliar with higher education but encouraged him to succeed in hopes of maintaining a sense of happiness. For both males, the support they felt from one or both parents helped them feel prepared for their future careers, despite a difference in self-efficacy belief levels.

Environmental Influences and Decisive Behaviors. Based on my findings and the adaptation of Bandura's TRC model, the dominant determinant of personal backgrounds and abilities shaped the environmental influences existing across the William & Mary campus and the decisive behaviors of the four FGS. Although the personal backgrounds and abilities of Jane, Thomas, Susan, and Spencer showed individual differences, those differences reflected similar indications of confidence and positivity. Moreover, using Bronfenbrenner's (1993) contextual category of exosystems, I remained aware that the environment existing within an exosystem consists of experiences gained outside of the familiarity of parents, caregivers, and friends. The physical campus and the available resources that enabled students to succeed academically, along with the Tribe's social climate and the complementing messaging of the For the Bold campaign, also played a role in shaping the environmental experiences of the FGS, with the exception of Thomas who was unaware of the campaign. Recall, that over half the time the participants were enrolled at William & Mary, COVID-19 affected how they experienced college.

Notably, the influence on self-efficacy beliefs through one's surroundings may then influence decisive behavior (Bandura, 1986). Based on the descriptions of the four FGS, their decisive behaviors, influenced by William & Mary's campus environment and dominantly by their personal backgrounds and abilities, reflected the goals communicated by the For the Bold campaign. As examples of the William & Mary community, Jane's decisive behavior reflected a confident student due partly to her motivation stemming from serving as a firefighter and the opportunity to help others during times of crisis. Secondly, Jane's decisive behavior led to a scholarly drive thanks to the mentorship of one Harvard professor prior to attending William & Mary, whereas the selection of international relations as a major reflected Susan's decisive

behavior as she embraced her interest in culture on a global scale. The academic environment on campus helped nurture the confidence of these participants.

Regarding the two male FGS, Thomas's personal background and abilities motivated him to seek out opportunities for problem solving at William & Mary and to discover solutions through creative approaches. Thomas's background also contributed to developing goals to achieve a strong financial standing and to earn respect based on his professional achievements. Lastly, Spencer explained that his values driven by strong work ethics and leadership, which align with William & Mary's campaign message, motivated him to bring about change. This, in turn, influenced his decisive behavior. He also shared that the support experienced through his personal background, prior to attending William & Mary, helped him feel more comfortable when exploring options of majors before committing to interdisciplinary studies late in his first year.

Lastly, I acknowledged Bronfenbrenner's (1993) fourth contextual category, macrosystems, and the influences that may stem from cultural backgrounds, political beliefs, religious practices, and other overarching values held by the four FGS leading up to their sophomore year (Paat, 2013). However, my interview questions centered on the FGS' selection of majors, formation of career paths, and the knowledge and influence of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. The points included within Bronfenbrenner's macrosystems were not discussed voluntarily by the four FGS. Therefore, determining how political beliefs and/or religious practices served as factors of influence and connectivity to campaign messaging for Jane, Susan, Spencer, and Thomas was not possible.

Implications for Practice

As discovered through the adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC, the personal abilities and influences described by the four FGS led to decisive behaviors within the environment of William & Mary, which includes an environment where For the Bold's $1 billion campaign emerged. To further explore the significance of the application of my adaptation of Bandura's model (see Figure 4 on pages 28 and 138), I designed a six-stage process (see Figure 12) referred to as the Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model. Generally, this model aims to provide a better understanding of how and when institutional branding begins to influence the self-efficacy of an individual or group. When used for this purpose, the model can also be widely applied, ranging from the needs of practitioners who serve in offices of advancement as they plan for future campaigns to those who provide academic advising to college students. Specifically, future researchers may apply this model to their own scholarly explorations by identifying an example of institutional branding, similar to William & Mary's For the Bold fundraising campaign, and by focusing on the implementation of practices used for distributing a designed message. Moreover, it allows researchers to trace possible influences of branding from its receiving point of the message to the student's action and, eventually, to the resulting outcomes on campus.

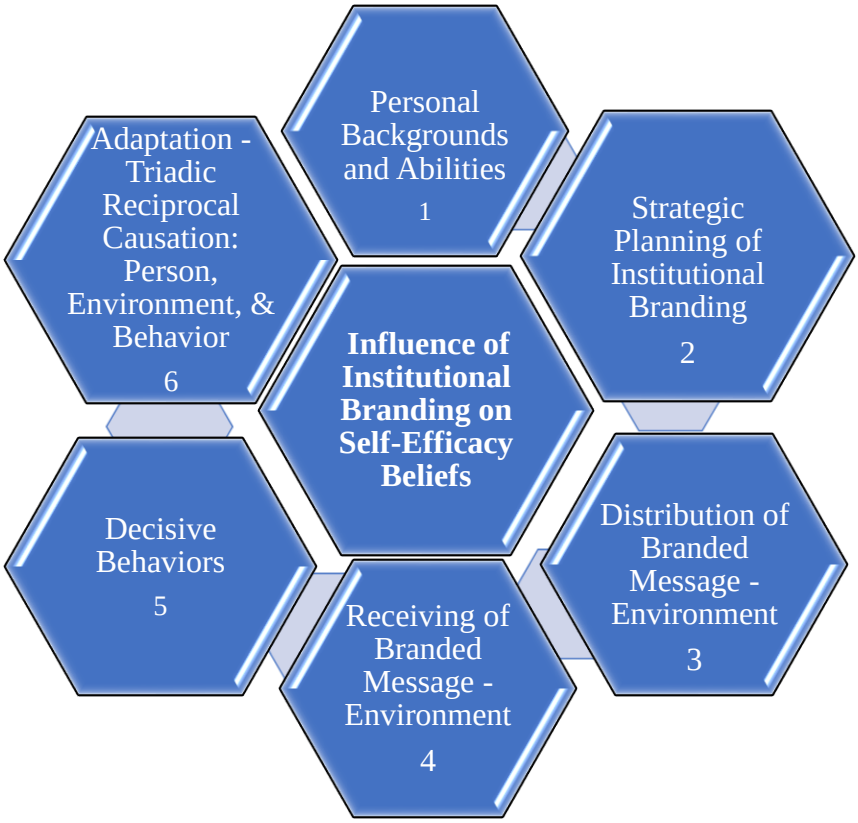
Model Applied to FGS and the For the Bold Campaign

My Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model (see Figure 12), which was created for this case study, mapped out indications of awareness and possible influence of institutional branding on self-efficacy beliefs through its six stages. I considered two FGS participants from Phase 2 (Susan and Spencer) as the model reflects a progression of institutional branding at William & Mary, specifically the For the Bold campaign. As referenced in Figure 12,

the six stages in the model track the advancement of an individual or group of students as they process the crafted messaging under Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and adaptation of his concept of TRC. Each stage of the Institutional Branding model offers overlapping features, which highlights levels of connectivity from institutional branding (For the Bold) and an individual or specific groups of college students (Susan and Spencer).

Figure 12

Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy Model



Note. Each stage in the Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model represents progression within institutional branding and the student(s) receiving the branded message.

Considering the first stage of my model, it acknowledges the personal backgrounds of the targeted group receiving the branding message, specifically one individual or group, prior to the actual strategic planning of institutional branding. Important to note is that students make

decisions to attend a college or university for a variety of reasons and self-select to apply and enroll. Following Stage 1 are the stages of planning/implementation, distribution, and receiving of the institutional branding message (Stages 2, 3, and 4). Stage 5 recognizes the decisive behaviors involved with the decisions made by the individual or group members to select a major and form a career path, and, lastly, Stage 6 applies my adaptation of Bandura's TRC model, which highlights an individual or group's dominant determinant of influence on self-efficacy beliefs. I applied my adaptation of Bandura's model to refer back to specific case study participants, the academic and social environment existing at William & Mary, and the decisive behavior possibly occurring due to the implementation of the For the Bold campaign.

For the purpose of this case study, entering the For the Bold campaign and one FGS student or one unified group into the model helped identify connectivity between the student and the message during his/her second-year experience, as well as when this connectivity was noted. Pointedly, a student may not realize the level of influence through his or her self-reflection as it is difficult to appreciate the ways in which campus culture overtly influences student choices. Therefore, I provided student examples moving through all six stages within the model even if the selected FGS participant believed that institutional branding had no influence on his/her self-efficacy and/or decisions regarding the selection of major.

FGS and Stages 1 Through 4 of Model. I selected Susan, who indicated a combination of high and low self-efficacy levels through the online survey and virtual interview, to serve as representation of a FGS's personal background (Stage 1). She also showed a high awareness of For the Bold (Stage 4) and actual involvement in spreading the message (Stage 4). Based on her virtual interview responses, Susan received the underlying message of acting boldly as she developed an understanding of For the Bold's campaign mission (Stages 2, 3, and 4). I also

selected Spencer, who indicated varied levels of self-efficacy beliefs (Stage 1). In his virtual interview, he shared that he was also well aware of the For the Bold campaign based on the distribution of messaging across campus, noting that he recognized specific campaign promotion through posters, charts, and banners within William & Mary's campus environment (Stage 3 and 4). The campaign materials aligned with the overall culture of academic rigor and achievement at William & Mary (Stage 2).

FGS and Stages 5 and 6 of Model. The model shifts from stages of personal background and self-efficacy beliefs (Susan and Spencer's levels), the implementation of institutional branding (For the Bold campaign), and campus environment (William & Mary) to Stage 5. When considering the decisive behavior of the two FGS participants, Susan participated in fundraising efforts organized by William & Mary. She specifically chose to serve in the student-run phone-a-thon effort to build campaign awareness and financial support. However, according to Spencer, William & Mary's distributed message did not motivate him to participate in fundraising or other activities related to the campaign. Instead, receiving the For the Bold messaging led to questions and confusion for Spencer regarding how the raised funds would be invested to benefit the campus community.

As discovered in Stage 5 and through the last stage, Stage 6, regardless of Susan's close connection to the For the Bold campaign, she believed that she selected her academic major of international relations prior to arriving to the campus and was not influenced by the campaign message. As for Spencer, he stated that he selected a major of interdisciplinary studies despite his acknowledgement and that he changed his mind frequently during his freshmen year before finalizing his decision. "I guess you can say that I decided to be bold in selecting my major, but I don't think that it has influenced me personally," he explained. By completing Stage 6, and all

stages included in the model, I provided a detailed path of action taken, starting with Susan and Spencer's self-efficacy beliefs, the strategic planning and distribution of the campaign messages, receiving the messaging, and then the possible influence stemming from the For the Bold messaging. Additionally, my adaptation of the TRC model (Stage 6) helped identify dominant determining factors of influence for both Susan and Spencer as they selected their majors and formed their professional goals while William & Mary also implemented the For the Bold campaign. The influence of branding on students' decisions and self-efficacy is embedded in the overarching culture of the college. In the case of William & Mary, the culture of academic achievement was represented in the campaign messaging.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This case study relied on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and model of TRC to offer a better understanding of the self-efficacy beliefs of William & Mary's FGS and the extent of influence, if any, from the institution's For the Bold campaign. Notably, Bandura (1986) refers to enhanced self-efficacy as an outcome stemming from one's level of confidence and persistence when challenges arise, particularly within diverse settings like a college campus (Bandura, 1986). My Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model considered the progression of two FGS participants, as examples, and the distribution and receiving of William & Mary's For the Bold messaging. The stages attempted to trace indications of campaign influence on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs, specifically through personal, environmental, and decisive behavioral determinants leading to their selections of academic majors and career paths.

Prior to reaching a point of data analysis, I considered that, "regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to

a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (Merriam, 1998, pp. 199-200). My data collection was designed to follow traditional approaches, yet the COVID-19 pandemic altered the process of holding interviews for research-based work and shaped the focus of the topic as the campus adjusted to CDC (2021) guidelines. Once I received the responses from the online survey and conducted the 12 individual virtual interviews, the analysis process followed the necessary steps to produce the case study findings. This approach enabled me to effectively answer my two research questions driving the study, yet the findings apply to my group of participants and do not directly transfer over to other universities and campuses. Others must take into consideration student populations, alumni support, and the history and culture of each university.

Conclusion

Institutional branding is designed to build on academic tradition and reputation and may successfully exert influence across college campuses. William & Mary's successful fundraising campaign, For the Bold: The Campaign for William & Mary, illustrates the motivation produced through institutional branding. However, for some, this approach may conflict with the traditional marketplace that targets specific audiences to sell an idea or product (Watson, 2011). Additionally, state universities and colleges must consider the consequences of stepping away from state funding as they balance the implementation of successful branding aimed to stand out from the crowd of higher education competitors (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008). William & Mary's strategy to leverage its heritage and history of graduates moving forward with rewarding careers helped the institution reach the $1 billion fundraising goal set for the campaign. The messaging of For the Bold suggested that if an individual was a member of William & Mary, as a student,

faculty, administrator, or staff member, the individual will hold the qualities of boldness (William & Mary, 2020a). The campaign strategy and message communicated both on and off campus served as a focal point for my qualitative case study that narrowed in on William & Mary's FGS in 2020 as they selected their academic majors and formed their professional goals, all under the last year of the institution's implementation of the For the Bold campaign. The study's research questions explored the extent of influence from the strategic messaging on the self-efficacy beliefs of the FGS during this critical time of academic progression. Moreover, the study's findings indicated that one FGS participant (Joe) out of 12 FGS interviewed believed that the For the Bold campaign directly influenced his selection of major.

Institutional branding offers the opportunity to increase awareness of a university's mission and may heighten the academic appeal among potential students but not without risks and difficult decisions made by academic leaders. Ironically, as more institutions of higher education embarked in branding initiatives, they consequently created a more competitive market for student enrollment (Newman et al., 2004). Using Bandura's (1993) social cognitive theory, I maintained a position that FGS at William & Mary who held high self-efficacy beliefs were also more likely to envision outcomes of success and, therefore, produce environments of positivity and support to reach their intended academic goals. Additionally, FGS who were managing low self-efficacy beliefs may have limited the academic options available due to doubts regarding their own abilities to complete their selected majors (Bandura, 1993). Yet, what I found was that regardless of the students' levels of self-efficacy, the FGS interviewed possessed confidence that helped some build on abilities and goals already present as well as enable others to overcome feelings of self-doubt to then select their desired majors at William & Mary and to plan ahead for the completion of academic degrees and for future professional roles following graduation.

According to Bandura's (1986) theory, persistence within individuals may be greater as a result of high self-efficacy levels. Based on the findings of my case study, William & Mary's FGS who held high levels of self-efficacy beliefs expressed the ability to manage their academic challenges and pursue their desired majors. However, the FGS who held varied, middle-ranged, or low levels of self-efficacy beliefs also pursued their intended majors rather than avoiding academic goals that may be realistically achievable (Bandura, 1986). The results reflected a significant outcome of this case study as the findings differed from prior research produced and included in other studies that focused on first-generation students. Specifically, the participants of my individual interviews showed a strong awareness of their academic challenges and available resources on campus, while remaining motivated during their sophomore year. This evidence described a contrary experience from that discovered in the research from Terenzini and colleagues (1996) and Webb and Cotton (2019).

The possibility of connecting abilities and confidence levels of the 12 FGS interviewed to the influences and motivation from William & Mary's institutional branding represented a significant goal of this case study, specifically as the FGS declared their majors and formed their career goals. By following Bandura's (1993) claims, this study acknowledged how FGS must hold enough interest and confidence to explore the unknowns presented through the college experience to frame the environmental settings and demands like those existing within William & Mary's campus climate. The study also recognized Bandura's (1986) claim that self-efficacy beliefs may also lead to inaccurate conclusions and, therefore, ill-suited professional outcomes due to a student's own reference to previous experiences.

Educators and future research projects may consider applying my adaptation of Bandura's (1986) model of TRC to help determine influential factors on self-efficacy beliefs

among targeted individuals or groups. Additionally, they may consider applying the six stages identified within my Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model to connect institutional branding to the adaptation of Bandura's model and the selection of academic majors and career planning. By doing so, the evidence provided through new studies may assist in the planning, implementation, and assessment of institutional branding, along with the direct and indirect influences of strategic messaging on first-generation students who will frame their futures by their sophomore year.

Reflecting on what I have gained through the planning and implementation of this response-centered study, I point directly to the experiences shared by the 12 FGS who agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the research. The participants arrived at William & Mary from different cities, traditional and non-traditional family settings, varied levels of financial security, and varied development of passion for their selected majors. Their diverse backgrounds helped produce new findings through the data collection in this study as I questioned how William & Mary's For the Bold campaign messaging may have influenced their self-efficacy beliefs as they selected their majors and formed their career paths.

I also found significant insight resulting from the online survey responses, which created a clear indication of self-efficacy beliefs of the 42 FGS (including the 12 FGS interviewed) who reflected on their abilities, persistence, and confidence. Additionally, I appreciate how those findings were examined through a different lens by applying the adaptation of Bandura's model of TRC and by utilizing my Institutional Branding and Influence on Self-Efficacy model designed for this study. For example, my branding model's stages recorded when Susan received the For the Bold message, based on her interview in Phase 2. By continuing through all six stages, I provided visual parallelism between the implementation of the campaign during a

designated timeframe, Susan's campus experience at William & Mary, and, ultimately, her belief that the campaign did not influence her selection of academic major.

Lastly, I appreciate how the results from this case study offered findings that differed from previous research connected to other peer-reviewed studies. Terenzini and colleagues (1996), for example, found that first-generation college students may begin their college journey without awareness of course demands and academic tracks available as undergraduates (Terenzini et al., 1996). However, both my online survey and individual interviews suggested that the FGS who participated in this study developed under direction and self-discipline to succeed academically. Moreover, the 12 FGS interviewed showed little indication of what Gahagan and Hunter (2006) refer to as the *sophomore slump* (p. 18). The findings from my case study underscore the purpose of my research and serve as motivation to conduct additional studies in search of new findings regarding FGS and the influence of institutional branding.

Appendix A

Statement of Researcher's Awareness of Possible Bias

I take into consideration probable discrepancies in the recollection of acts, behavior, and events and the reports' inability to produce any direct observations on the topic (Spickard, 2017), and I fully acknowledge my biases as a researcher based on my inspiration behind selecting the case study's topic of institutional branding and its connection to the self-efficacy beliefs of FGS. Beginning my own college education as a first-generation female student in 1990, I strongly identify with the uncertainty surrounding undergraduates who enter higher education institutions already burdened with full-time employment and blind to academic resources and programs available to them.

Over the timeline of my professional career, I have accepted leadership roles in the field of broadcast journalism, creating branded messages that were designed to persuade targeted television viewers and online users to watch specific newscasts and television news stations. Following my career as a journalist, I committed to a full-time faculty member position at a four-year university in Virginia, and between 2005 and 2015, I encouraged undergraduates to study the practice of branding through the field of public relations. Currently, I dedicate all efforts to communications and branding at that same institution, but within its University Libraries. I admittedly practice methods of institutional branding with the intent of shaping the self-efficacy beliefs of undergraduates as they pursue academic degrees.

Appendix B

Online Survey to Explore Self-Efficacy Beliefs of First-generation Sophomores at William & Mary

Initial Questions for Qualification of Participation in Study (Hoyt, 2019)

Responses fall under a choice of YES, NO, NOT SURE and Academic School Selection

1. Please confirm you are a first-generation college student at William & Mary. (Y, N, NS)
2. Please confirm you are a sophomore student at William & Mary. (Y, N, NS)
3. Please identify your gender. M; F; Other
4. Do you have one or more siblings who have entered a higher education institution as a first-generation college student? (Y, N, NS)
5. Please determine the academic school that your possible or selected academic major falls under:
    a) William & Mary's School of Arts & Sciences
    b) William & Mary's School of Education
    c) William & Mary's Mason School of Business
    d) William & Mary's School of Marine Science
    e) William & Mary Law School

Motivational Engagement Instrument – Academic Adaptation (Wu & Fan, 2017)

1. Online Survey Questions on Self Efficacy – Effort

    Likert-type measurement: Responses range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

- I always work as hard as I can to finish my assignments.
- I don't put a lot of effort into finishing my schoolwork.
- I put more effort into schoolwork than I do in my other activities.

- I always put a lot of effort into doing my schoolwork.

2. Online Survey Questions on Self Efficacy – Persistence

   Likert-type measurement: Responses range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

   - I get distracted very easily when I'm studying.
   - Even if my schoolwork is dull or boring, I keep at it until I am finished.
   - I get started on doing my schoolwork but often don't stick with it for very long.
   - I often begin my class assignments but give up before I am done (not included in survey).

Identity Information, and Barrier Scales (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980)

1. Identity Scale

   Likert-type measurement: Responses range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

   - I don't know what my major strengths and weaknesses are. (not included in survey)
   - Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.
   - I am uncertain about the occupation I would enjoy.
   - My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year.

2. Barriers Scale

   Likert-type measurement: Responses range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

   - I am uncertain about my ability to finish the necessary education or training.
   - I don't have the money to follow the career I want most.
   - I lack the special talents to follow my first choice.
   - An influential person in my life does not approve of my vocational choice.

Appendix C

Relationship of Survey Questions to Research Questions

Survey Questions for William & Mary First-generation Sophomores	**Research Question #1**	**Research Question #2**
	• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influenced the self-efficacy of first-generation sophomores? 1. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major? 2. Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?	• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals? 1. How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals? 2. Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?
Initial Questions for Qualification of Participation in Study (Responses fall under a choice of YES, NO, and NOT SURE) • Are you registered as a sophomore student at William & Mary? (Y, N, NS) • Are you registered as a female student at William & Mary? (Y, N, NS) • Are you considered a first-generation college student at William & Mary? (Y, N, NS)	The initial questions for qualification serve as a gateway to which students willingly respond to this study's online survey. Participants must fall under the categories communicated at the beginning of the survey before moving forward to specific questions regarding levels of self-efficacy, confidence, and persistence.	The initial questions for qualification serve as a gateway to which students willingly respond to this study's online survey. Participants must fall under the categories communicated at the beginning of the survey before moving forward to specific questions regarding levels of self-efficacy, confidence, and persistence.

• Do you have one or more siblings who have entered a higher education institution as a first-generation college student? (Y, N, NS)		
Part 1 - Motivational Engagement Instrument – Academic Adaptation (Wu & Fan, 2017) **Self-efficacy – Effort**		
SQ1- • I always work as hard as I can to finish my assignments. • I don't put a lot of effort into finishing my schoolwork. • I put more effort into schoolwork than I do in my other activities. • I always put a lot of effort into doing my schoolwork.	SQ1 Once first-generation sophomores select the first portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on effort. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for individual virtual interviews on the selection of academic majors under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.	SQ1 Once first-generation sophomores select the first portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on effort. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the formation of career paths under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.
Part 2 - Online Survey (Wu & Fan, 2017) **Questions on Self Efficacy – Persistence**		
SQ2 – • I get distracted very easily when I'm studying.	**SQ2** Once first-generation sophomores select the second portion of the survey, they will offer their personal	**SQ2** Once first-generation sophomores select the second portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation

• Even if my schoolwork is dull or boring, I keep at it until I am finished. • I get started on doing my schoolwork but often don't stick with it for very long.	evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on persistence. The three prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the selection of academic majors under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.	of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on persistence. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the formation of career paths under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.
Part 3 - Identity Information (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980) **Identity Scale**		
SQ3 • Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. • I am uncertain about the occupation I would enjoy. • My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year.	SQ3 Once first-generation sophomores select the third portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on identity. The three prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the selection of academic majors under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.	SQ3 Once first-generation sophomores select the third portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on identity. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the formation of career paths under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.

Part 4: Barriers Scale (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980) **Barrier Scale**		
SQ4: • I am uncertain about my ability to finish the necessary education or training. • I don't have the money to follow the career I want most. • I lack the special talents to follow my first choice. • An influential person in my life does not approve of my vocational choice.	SQ 4 Once first-generation sophomores select the last portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on identified barriers. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the selection of academic majors under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.	SQ 4 Once first-generation sophomores select the last portion of the survey, they will offer their personal evaluation of their self-efficacy levels based on prompts centered on identified barriers. The four prompts will help indicate ranges of self-efficacy beliefs of each first-generation sophomore participant. The prompts refer back to my research questions and will assist in requesting participants for future individual interviews on the formation of career paths under William & Mary's For the Bold campaign.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Protocol for Interview Questions – First-generation Sophomores at William & Mary

1. What academic discipline have you selected to pursue at William & Mary?

I want to confirm that you indicated [discipline] as your major on the online survey.

- Please share more about how you came to decide on this major. Can you describe the timeline of this process?
- Describe at least two motivating/influencing factors leading to the selection of your academic discipline.
- Does the selection of your academic discipline differ from your expectations formed when applying to college or as a college freshman? If so, at what point in your academic timeline did your expectations shift to pursue a different discipline? What influenced this shift?

2. What factors helped contribute to your decision to major in _____?
   - To what extent did your parent(s) or caregiver(s) encourage or discourage you to pursue the selected academic discipline?
   - To what extent did your peers encourage or discourage you to pursue the selected academic discipline?
3. Describe the abilities you feel necessary to successfully complete your academic major/academic track.
   - Describe how confident you are in your abilities to complete the academic major/academic track at William & Mary?
   - Describe how well does the selected discipline support your personal interests?

- Describe how well does your major help support your professional goals?
- What are your career goals? Tell me how you determined this pathway.

4. To what extent are you aware of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign?
   - Describe what you know about the For the Bold campaign. Describe if the FTB campaign influenced your decision-making process in selecting your major and your career aspirations.
   - The For the Bold campaign recognized 100 Years of Women at William & Mary through campus promotion. To what extent are you aware of the promotion of 100 Years of Women at William & Mary? Describe if this recognition across campus has influenced your decision-making process in selecting your major and your career aspirations.
   - How does the FTB campaign message influence your confidence about your future career pathway?
5. A number of factors influence how you think about the choice of your major, your confidence in moving forward on your career path, and your initial abilities and strengths. We have discussed a few items here, but what might I have missed that you think has influenced your decision-making about your major and your career pathway.

Appendix E

Consent Form for Participating First-generation Sophomores

Attending William & Mary

Consent to Participate in Case Study Interviews at William & Mary

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Jennifer L. Hoyt, EdD candidate at William & Mary. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about how first-generation sophomores attending the institution at William & Mary perceive the influence of the For the Bold campaign. I will be one of approximately seven students being interviewed during this session of the case study. I also acknowledge that approximately 15 additional first-generation sophomores from William & Mary will be interviewed in other interview sessions.

1. My participation in this case study is voluntary. I understand that I will receive a gift bag worth $10 from the William & Mary Bookstore for my participation. I also understand that I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty, with the exception of forfeiting the gift bag. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the case study, no one on my campus will be notified.

2. I understand that most interviewees participating in the study will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by one researcher (Jennifer Hoyt) from William & Mary. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will occur during the interview session. If I do not wish to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies, which protect the anonymity of individual participants.

5. Faculty and administrators from William & Mary will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: the Protection of Human Subjects

Committee at William & Mary. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted online via Dr. Jennifer Stevens at jastev@wm.edu or by phone at (757) 221-3862.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____
My Signature	Date
_____	_____
My Printed Name	Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact: Dr. Tom Ward at (757) 221-2358, tjward@wm.edu.

Appendix F

Relationship of Interview Questions to Research Questions

Interview Questions for W&M First-generation Sophomores	**Research Question #1**	**Research Question #2**
Participants will be asked open-ended, semi-structured questions that center on possible awareness of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign and the campaign message's possible influence on the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores at William & Mary as they select/selected majors and form career paths.	• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy of first-generation sophomores? • How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of a major? • Do traditionally-gendered majors align by gender for first-generation sophomores?	• How does the implementation of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign influence the self-efficacy beliefs of first-generation sophomores as they formulate career goals? • How does high and low self-efficacy influence the selection of career goals? • Do traditionally-gendered careers align by gender for first-generation sophomores?
IQ 1: What academic discipline have you selected to pursue at William & Mary?	A direct question that assigns each FGS student with her selection of academic discipline	Offers an indication of career formation
IQ 1a: Please share more about how you came to decide on this major. Can you describe the timeline?	IQ 1a ties to the inquiry of influences, including the implementation of W&M's branding, on the selection of academic majors by FGS and how long FGS have committed to the selection.	IQ 1a may offer an indication of career formation and beliefs in capability by FGS in relation to W&M's For the Bold campaign.

IQ 1b: Describe at least two motivating factors leading to the selection of your academic discipline.	Now prompted through reflection of their personal selection process, FGS may better recall if W&M's For the Bold offered any motivation.	This question may lead to further discussion of career paths as FGS discuss motivating factors leading to selection of majors.
IQ 1c: Does the selection of your academic discipline differ from your expectations formed as a college freshman? If so, at what point in your academic timeline did your expectations shift to pursue a different discipline?	This question serves as a strong indication of influence stemming from W&M's For the Bold as students enter (probably as outsiders to the campaign) to becoming fully targeted by the branding. It also moves closer to asking why they shifted.	IQ 1c may lead to further discussion of career paths as FGS discuss any recognized shift from one academic discipline to another.
IQ 2: What factors helped contribute to your decision to major in _____?	This narrows in on the backgrounds of FGS (finances, culture) and how For the Bold may have played an influential role in the selection process.	IQ 2 may lead to further discussion of career paths as FGS discuss their backgrounds and perceived goals.
IQ 2a: To what extent did your parent(s) or caregiver(s) encourage or discourage you to pursue the selected academic discipline?	As FGS, parental support generally comes from a lack of knowledge and preparation of higher education. Parents may serve as a stronger motivator than For the Bold's branded message.	This serves as one of the strongest questions on influences tied to career formation, regardless of student classification. Yet, it may be even stronger with a parental disconnect to higher education.
IQ 2b: To what extent did your peers encourage or discourage you to pursue the selected academic discipline?	Like parental support, FGS peer support generally comes from a lack of knowledge and preparation of higher education. Peers may serve as a stronger motivator than For the Bold's branded message.	This serves as one of the strongest questions on influences tied to career formation, especially considering the student classification. Peer pressure shapes decisions on a different, social levels and values for first-generation students.
IQ 3: Describe the abilities you feel necessary to successfully complete your academic major/academic track.	IQ 3 begins to offer significant insight to levels of perceived self-efficacy beliefs and possible connections to For the Bold's campaign as students pursue their academic majors.	This question offers insight of self-evaluation when forming career paths, which For the Bold may play a role in self-evaluation and goal setting.

IQ 3a: How confident are you in your abilities to complete the academic major/academic track at William & Mary?	This question focuses directly on Bandura's SCT and TRC as FGS discuss their confidence levels necessary to succeed in their academic majors. It also probes further into any influence/confidence boost produced by For the Bold.	As confidence in abilities transfers over to career formation, this question offers layers of inquiry: confidence due to parental/peer pressures, culture, FGS status, and also For the Bold's branded message?
IQ 3b: How well does the selected discipline support your personal interests?	This serves as a cross-section of what seems appealing to individual FGS and their perceived self-efficacy beliefs while attending W&M as For the Bold continues to implement a branding strategy.	The question helps uncover any indication that students are moving toward or away from a career based on their personal interests, but it does not directly answer why without a follow-up question.
IQ 3c: How well does your major help support your professional goals?	This question further probes the selection process of FGS and the self-efficacy levels of FGS as they progress at W&M under the implementation of For the Bold's campaign.	FGS should offer indications of formation of their career paths through this question. It taps into goals set based on self-perceived capabilities and possible influence from For the Bold.
IQ 4: To what extent are you aware of William & Mary's For the Bold campaign? (Skip IQ 4a, b, and c if participant has not heard of the FTB campaign)	IQ 4 is placed strategically after several leads questioning the possible influence of W&M's For the Bold. It also represents an important inquiry related to my research: are first-generation sophomores aware of W&M's branding as they select their academic disciplines?	IQ 4 is placed strategically after several leads questioning the possible influence of W&M's For the Bold. It also represents an important inquiry related to my research: are first-generation sophomores aware of W&M's branding as they form career paths?
IQ 4a: Describe what you know about the For the Bold campaign. Describe if the FTB campaign influenced your decision-making process in selecting your major and your career aspirations.	This question represents the most targeted inquiry related to my research on how For the bold influences the self-efficacy of FGS, and to what extent. It then provides a strong transition to questions of the selection of majors.	This question represents the most targeted inquiry related to my research on how For the bold influences the self-efficacy of FGS, and to what extent. It then provides a strong transition to questions of the formation of career paths.

IQ 4b: The For the Bold campaign recognized 100 Years of Women at William & Mary through campus promotion. To what extent are you aware of the promotion of 100 Years of Women at William & Mary? Describe if this recognition across campus has influenced your decision-making process in selecting your major and your career aspirations.	This question helps explore other areas that first-generation sophomores have viewed the campaign message implemented by William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. It also explores any direct or indirect interaction first-generation sophomores may have had with activities related to 100 Years of Women. Lastly, the probe explores the possibility that recognition of 100 Years of Women may have influenced a first-generation sophomore's selection of a major.	This question helps explore other areas that first-generation sophomores have viewed the campaign message implemented by William & Mary's For the Bold campaign. It also explores any direct or indirect interaction first-generation sophomores may have had with activities related to 100 Years of Women. Lastly, the probe explores the possibility that recognition of 100 Years of Women may have influenced a first-generation sophomore's formation of career paths.
IQ 4c: How does the FTB campaign message influence your confidence about your future career pathway?	This question hinges on the selection of academic disciplines and For the Bold's campaign message to further discuss the confidence levels of FGS as they form career paths.	IQ 4c asks the most direct question on self-efficacy beliefs and the formation of career paths by FGS as W&M implements its For the Bold's campaign message.
IQ 5: A number of factors influence how you think about the choice of your major, your confidence in moving forward on your career path, and your initial abilities and strengths. We have discussed a few items here, but what might I have missed that you think has influenced your decision-making about your major and your career pathway?	IQ 5 opens up opportunities for FGS to contribute comments and/or questions related to Research Question 1 as it relates to self-efficacy, the selection of academic disciplines, and W&M's For the Bold campaign.	IQ 5 opens up opportunities for FGS to contribute comments and/or questions related to Research Question 1 as it relates to self-efficacy, the formation of career paths, and W&M's For the Bold campaign.

Appendix G

Responses to Online Survey Prompts from All 42 First-generation Sophomores

Online Survey Prompts and Responses	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Level of Self-Efficacy Beliefs (as 1 group)
SP1	0	0	1	1	6	17	17	High
SP2	12	16	4	3	1	4	1	High
SP3* 41 responses	0	0	1	0	14	14	10	High
SP4	0	0	1	1	7	25	8	High
SP5	0	4	5	1	16	7	9	Middle
SP6	0	2	3	2	19	12	4	Middle
SP7	2	9	9	7	8	1	2	Vary
SP8	3	6	7	4	7	6	9	Vary
SP9	3	8	4	2	10	8	7	Vary
SP10	0	5	4	4	10	11	8	Low
SP11	1	9	3	2	14	7	6	Vary
SP12	2	5	10	6	4	9	6	Vary
SP13	2	7	12	11	2	5	3	Vary
SP14	17	10	3	5	6	0	1	High

Appendix H

Participant Responses from 12 First-generation Sophomores to Online Survey Prompts

Online Survey Prompts and Responses	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Level of Self-Efficacy Beliefs (as 1 group)
SP1	0	0	1	0	2	2	7	High
SP2	5	5	1	0	1	0	0	High
SP3	0	0	1	0	3	6	2	High
SP4	0	0	1	0	1	6	4	High
SP5	0	1	0	0	7	1	3	Middle
SP6	0	2	1	1	3	3	2	High
SP7	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	Vary
SP8	2	1	1	1	1	2	4	Low
SP9	1	1	2	0	4	1	3	Middle
SP10	0	0	3	1	2	2	4	Low
SP11	0	2	0	0	4	1	5	Low
SP12	1	0	3	2	1	4	1	Vary
SP13	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	Vary
SP14	6	2	0	2	2	0	0	High

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Profile:

My role at Old Dominion University includes academic engagement, communication, and institutional branding within Old Dominion University Libraries. As Head of Engagement, I lead the Libraries' Department of Engagement, and I apply my prior experience as a full-time faculty member at ODU and a former journalist for broadcasting outlets to build collaborative relationships and to encourage productive dialogue in the field of higher education.

Date of Birth: February 14, 1972
Place of Birth: Killeen, Texas

Education:

William & Mary
Ed. D., Educational Policy, Planning & Leadership
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Old Dominion University
M. A. English, Professional Writing
May 2008

University of Texas at Tyler
B. A., Journalism
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Professional Experience in Higher Education:

As Head of Libraries' Engagement, I currently lead the Department of Libraries' Engagement as it builds sustainable relationships, collaborates, and partners with other colleges and departments across campus. I oversee the planning, promotion, and coverage of Libraries' events during academic semesters, as well as communicate with targeted audiences via social media, internal video monitors, University Announcements, and the Libraries' website.

From August 2008 to June 2015, I served as Old Dominion University's full-time Lecturer of Journalism and Professional Writing. Honored to join ODU's Department of English, I designed each syllabus to allow for discussion of assignments and current events. I also served on the Alumni-Assessment-Student Recruiting Committee and Public Relations Committee. I was actively involved with student work involving public relations and journalism, and I advised undergraduates as they planned specific academic tracks.