

Exploring the Goals and Achievement of First-Generation College Students

Biesiada, Joseph M.¹, Schaffer, Jackson T.¹, & Kim, Yeo-eun²

¹ Department of Psychology

² Department of Educational Studies

INTRODUCTION

- First-generation college students are defined as students whose parents did not complete a four-year bachelor's degree.
- First-generation college students are less likely to graduate than continuing-generation students (Forrest Cataldi et al., 2018)
- First-generation students have similar self-efficacy to continuing-generation students but are more likely to have lower GPA's (Vuong et al., 2010)
- First-generation students struggle more with social adjustment than continuing-generation students (Hertel, 2002)

AIM

The aim of this project was to examine and compare learning and achievement of first and continuing-generation college students.

Research Question #1

What specific goals are first-generation and continuing-generation students pursuing?

Research Question #2

How do achievement levels between these groups differ?

METHODS

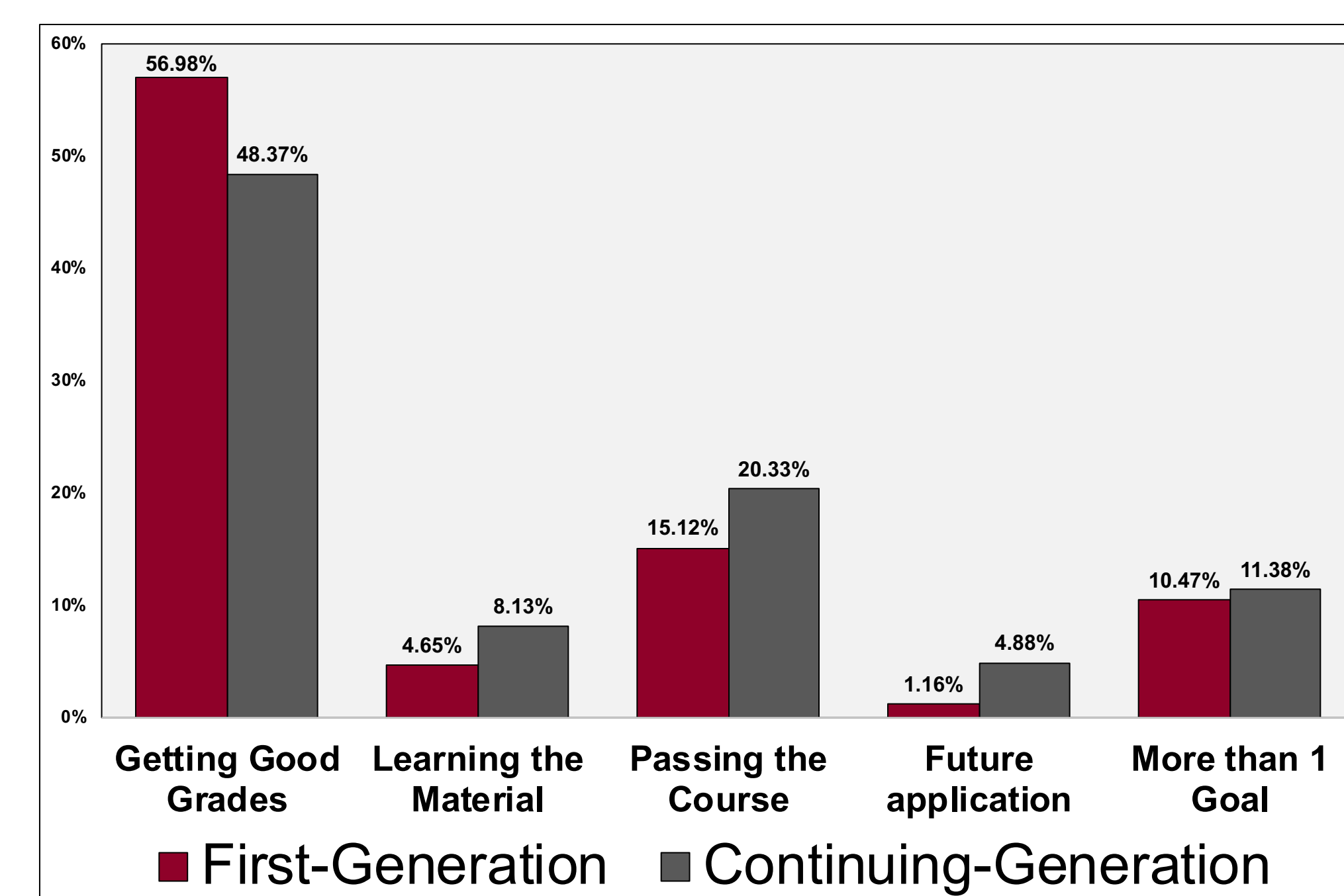
Participants

- Undergraduate students ($n = 365$)
 - First-generation ($n = 86$)
 - Continuing-generation ($n = 246$)
- Recruited from a chemistry course

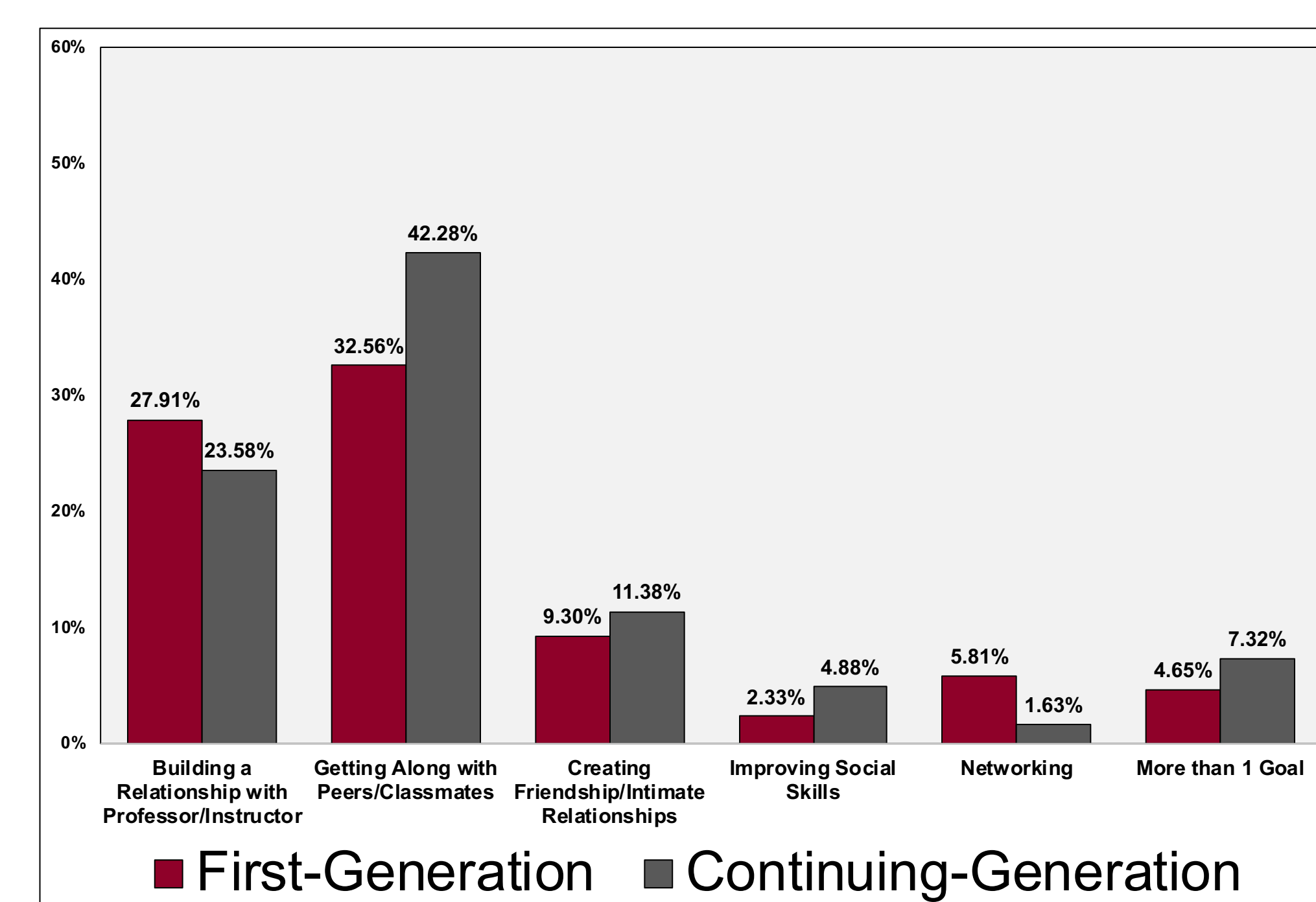
RESULTS

Research Question #1

What is your most important **academic** goal?



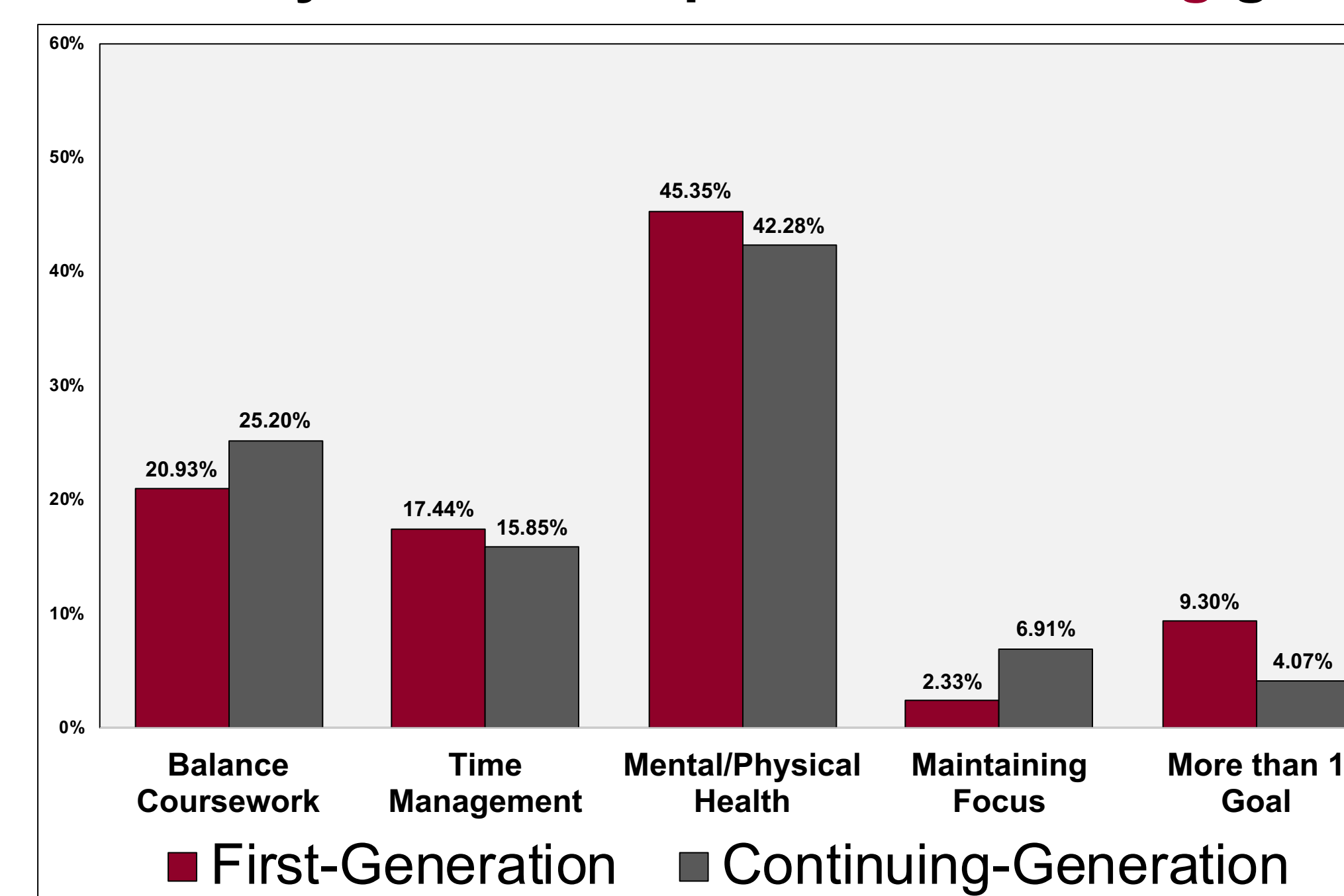
What is your most important **social** goal?



Procedures

- Online survey consisting of open-ended questions about their most important goals
- **Goal-content analysis:** Inductive thematic coding was conducted
- **T-test:** An independent samples t-test was conducted

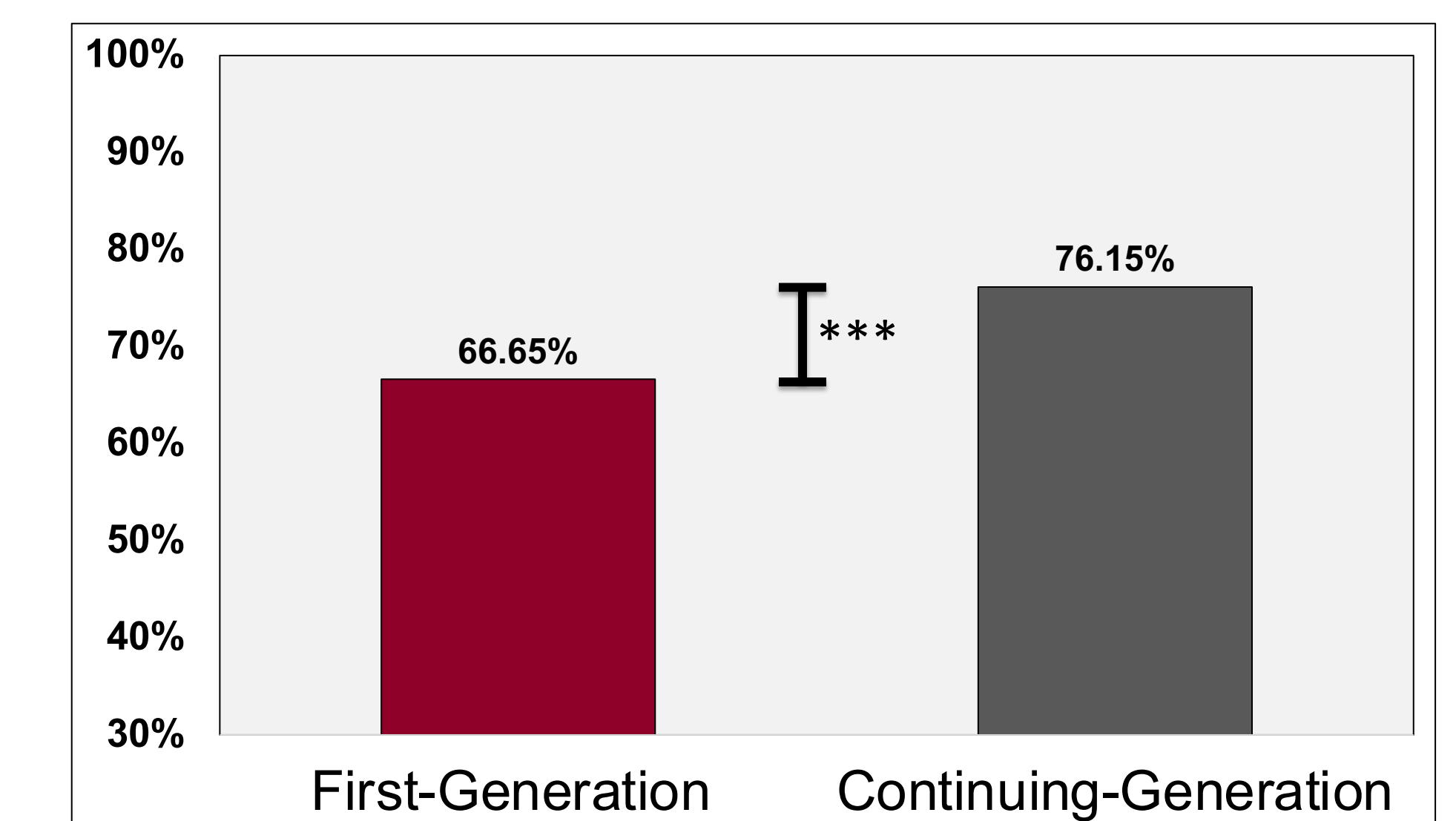
What is your most important **well-being** goal?



- The patterns slightly varied between the two groups.
- The importance of getting good grades appeared for both groups.
- Social goals varied more than other types of goals.
- Mental/physical health, balancing coursework, and time management were salient goals for both groups.

Research Question #2

How do **achievement** levels differ?



- A significant difference was found between first-generation and continuing generation students, $t(315) = -5.84, p < 0.001$.
- The first-generation students ($M = 66.65, SD = 13.54$) showed significantly lower achievement than continuing-generation students ($M = 76.15, SD = 12.31$)

CONCLUSIONS

- These results build on existing evidence to highlight the challenges that first-generation students might face.
- Our findings contribute an understanding of the specific goals that first-generation students strive to achieve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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