

Perceived barriers prevent Mexican-American students from pursuing education, researcher finds

4 March 2009

Only 57 percent of Mexican-American students graduate from high school, and 11 percent receive college degrees, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In a new study, a University of Missouri researcher found that perceived educational barriers significantly predicted Mexican-American students' educational aspirations more than the influences of gender, generation level and parents' education level. Identifying what students perceive they need may assist school professionals and counselors in helping students develop skills and confidence needed to achieve their goals.

"By better understanding the perceived barriers toward education, professionals may be able to determine the best way to help Mexican-American students climb the academic ladder," said Lisa Flores, associate professor of educational, school and counseling psychology in the MU College of Education. "Career counselors should examine Mexican-American high school students' beliefs concerning what resources they need and help them develop effective strategies to deal with barriers students encounter or expect to encounter in their educational pursuits."

Flores and co-author Lizette Ojeda, doctoral candidate in counseling psychology at MU, analyzed factors related to educational aspirations of 186 Mexican-American high school students, including gender, generation level, parents' education and perceived barriers. She found that perceived barriers were the most influential factor in the students' ability to reach their educational goals. Flores also found that Hispanic students with a longer family history in the United States have greater educational aspirations than students with a more recent immigration history. Neither parents' educational level nor gender influenced students' educational desires.

"School counselors should help students identify strengths to increase self-confidence and match students with a mentor for academic support," Flores said. "School personnel need to be aware of the possible influence of culturally related outputs, like generation level, along with contextual factors, like parents' education, when helping Mexican-American students realize their educational goals."

More information: "The Influence of Gender, Generation Level, Parents' Education Level, and Perceived Barriers on the Educational Aspirations of Mexican-American High School Students" was published recently in *The Career Development Quarterly*.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

APA citation: Perceived barriers prevent Mexican-American students from pursuing education, researcher finds (2009, March 4) retrieved 27 June 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-barriers-mexican-american-students-pursuing.html>

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