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Social cognitive career theory: Applicability in assessing the academic performance of Mexican American college students

The Latino population has become the biggest minority group in the United States settling in all areas from big coast cities to small towns in the Midwest. In the state of Missouri, Latinos have had the largest population growth over the past four years. As a result of this population increase, Latinos will account for a significant portion of school children and job seekers (Arbona, 1995). The career development of Latinos is an important issue because the quality of the state's labor market will depend largely on this group's education and job skills. It is important to research the career development of Latinos because the knowledge generated will aid in understanding the development of their career options and choices, their educational goals and attainment, and those factors that influence their career and educational decision-making. Unfortunately, Latinos have the lowest rate of academic achievement, especially at the university level. Thus, the purpose of my study is to examine what factors influence Latino college students' academic self-efficacy, which is a student's perception on whether they can influence their learning and perform well in their academics, and their actual academic performance (measured by college G.P.A.). The study assumes two factors are influential: a student's level of acceptance to either American culture or Mexican culture (acculturation), and their feelings of belonging or fitting into the university. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; 2000) is a theory that demonstrates the career development paths of individuals. SCCT was used as a basis for developing the relationships among the variables. Questionnaires were given to a sample of 250 Mexican American college students attending a predominately white institution, and the variables were analyzed to determine the relationship among each other.