

Public Abstract

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Title:LATINA/O CULTURAL VALUES, ACCULTURATION, CULTURAL FIT, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

As the representation of Mexican Americans increases in the United States, it becomes more apparent that many issues have yet to be addressed to meet their needs and ensure their success in America. One of the most troubling and urgent issues is the achievement gap between Mexican American students and other racial/ethnic minorities, including Whites. With college drop-out rates rising for Mexican Americans, it is imperative to explore factors that may enhance their retention and well-being. This study examined the influence of cultural variables, such as Latino cultural values, cultural fit, Anglo-oriented and Mexican-oriented acculturation, on the perceptions of psychological well-being and academic persistence for 440 Mexican American college students. The first analysis found that congruence of personal values and university values and positive perceptions of the university environment significantly predicted students' positive psychological well-being. The second analysis found that students that had high adherence to Latino cultural values, positive perceptions of the university, and positive psychological functioning perceived that they were more likely to stay in the university. The findings suggest that Mexican American students who feel their university fits their culture are psychologically healthier, and that Mexican American students' culture is a strength that may contribute to their decisions about staying in college.