

Resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence of college seniors in higher education

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher learning have struggled to retain incoming freshmen, especially Hispanic students, who historically face greater challenges to succeed. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence of college seniors with an emphasis on first- and continued-generation Hispanic students. An examination of how retention factors have supported Hispanic college seniors was explored through qualitative interviews. Implications of this research provide insight to college, career, school, and community counselors working with prospective Hispanic students. Counselors are likely to address and support the needs of first- and continued-generation Hispanic students while contributing to the improvement of university programs. An emphasis on strategies to increase the number of Hispanic college graduates must include commitment at all levels of campus communities. Such emphasis will be advantageous to college and university counseling centers as they work with this particular population.

Keywords: Hispanic students, retention, resiliency, self-efficacy, persistence

INTRODUCTION

Retention of college students is a critical issue in Higher Education (Tinto, 1993). Universities continue to grapple with this issue particularly in light of federal funding. A lack of persistence has generally been seen as a problem in completing college. With student attrition rates of fundamental importance to most university systems (Tinto, Russo & Kadel, 1994), of key importance is the ability to identify quickly and accurately when and why students considered dropping out or withdrawing from a campus. The ability to identify the population at risk can increase the ability to retain a student population. “The fastest growing ethnic group in the nation, Latinos, has become a force that higher education must consider with more overt intention” (Brown, Santiago & Lopez, 2003, p. 40). This study focuses on the retention factors, characteristics of resiliency, persistence, and self-efficacy of college seniors with an emphasis on first generation, Hispanic students.

Bui (2002) found that many first-generation college students were convinced they were less prepared for college, were more concerned about financial aid, were more apprehensive about failing, and were concerned about knowing less about college social climate. These students came from families where neither parent had any formal education beyond high school. Continuing generation students, however, are typically from middle class or upper middle class families and have a set expectation of attending college. Another key distinction was the preparation for college experienced by this group. Because of their family history, planning and research of undergraduate programs and campuses was more likely to take place well in advance of high school graduation (Bui, 2002). That experience was unlike first generation Latinos or Hispanics who face a multitude of barriers with no past family experience to learn from or help in planning their academic future. According to Fry (2002), many Latinos enroll but too few actually graduate from college. Just over a decade ago, the dropout rate for Latinos was almost 30% which was three times the rate of white students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). While the enrollment rate for Latinos continues to increase, Latino college students are still behind other groups in degree completion rates (Fry, 2004).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

First generation, low income, Hispanic, college students continue to face obstacles when seeking to complete a four year degree program. Unlike continued-generation students, first-generation college students tend to get lost in the transition from their first-year of college to their senior year and beyond. Researchers have examined first-generation college students; those individuals whose parents have not attended college. The problem identified for this study was the lack of research on success factors of college seniors, particularly first generation Hispanic students. Research on retention factors, resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence in their successful matriculation through college was lacking for this population.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions addressing the quantitative section in this study consists of the following:

1. What are the perceived retention factors associated with success for continued-generation college seniors?

2. What are the perceived retention factors associated with first generation Hispanic college seniors?
3. Is there a relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of continued-generation college seniors?
4. Is there a relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of first generation Hispanic college seniors?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Identifying retention factors such as, resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of successful university seniors including first-generation and continued-generation college Hispanic students can benefit college administrators in developing recruitment and retention programs to facilitate student success. As enrollment continues to rise and the funding for programs continues to shrink, the significance of identifying factors that assist in student success and retention plays an integral part in the overall success of institutions of higher learning. In this study, the researcher attempted to assist institutions in identifying and implementing effective programs.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Nuñez, Sparks, and Hernandez (2011) found that Hispanics were more likely to be first generation college students over any other ethnic minority. Both Hispanic females and males were found to experience internal conflicts related to traditional roles which included assisting their families with household responsibilities, resource provisions, and culturally influenced roles.

A 2005 report by the California Public Policy Institute noted that in that state, among native born residents 25 years of age and older, only 13 percent of Hispanics had attained bachelor's degrees compared to 14 percent for African Americans, and 17 percent for Native Americans and 33 percent for Whites (Reed, 2005). While student enrollment and diversity increases, universities will continuously need to employ original and inventive ways of being proactive to ensure student retention and completion.

While there have been substantive efforts to address dropout rates in education and public policy, the disparity between Hispanics and their white counterparts remains significant. According to a study by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), graduation rates for Hispanic students still lag behind at 51 percent, compared to 59 percent for their White counterparts (Kelly, Schneider & Carey, 2010). The consequences of Hispanic students not completing college negatively impacts economic conditions and society's social climate (Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2005). The President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (2003) has found lack of education for Latinos to be related to employment rate, welfare use, and health status.

First-generation college students are identified as those in which neither parent has a college education. Closely examining the characteristics of degree attainment and college persistence is critical as first-generation status is a negative predictor of student success (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Contrary to continued-generation students, first-generation students lack information as their parents have limited knowledge of the university system and are unable

to provide effective guidance in college preparation and hampered by ineffective college counseling (Ceballo, 2004; Fuligni, 1997).

Cultural and family expectations were found to affect Latino students (Fuligni & Tseng, 1999; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000) as well as gender issues. First-generation students were more likely to be older females, with children, who came from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and worked more hours (Bui, 2002). Interestingly, Hispanic females are often faced with a unique set of challenges. In a study by Aguilar (1996), barriers to educational success for Latina young women included personal, socioeconomic, intracultural, and extracultural challenges. Personal barriers included fear, stress, and low self-esteem. Despite such barriers, female students were more likely than males to remain enrolled in a university past the first year (Otero, Rivas, & Rivera, 2007). First generation males perceived more barriers than second generation male students (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009).

The journey through college was found to begin as early as the junior year of high school for continued-generation students (Writ, Choy, & Gerald, 2001). Parents of these students were more involved in the college process including helping their child decide which college to attend and how to pick a major. This support also helped students with resiliency. Connor-Davidson (2003) described resiliency as a characteristic which evolves over time based on experiences, personal growth, and development. Gordon (1996) described resilience as the ability to prosper, mature, and increase capabilities by overcoming barriers and unfavorable conditions. The ability to overcome obstacles and raise competence requires that students draw on all their available resources both personal and environmental. Personal factors that are a part of resilience are self-concept and intelligence. Students with strong resilience and self-efficacy are more likely to remain in college, ultimately achieving a degree (Allen, 1999).

Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding, Cavazos, Castro, and Vela (2010) found goal setting, interpersonal relationships, intrinsic motivation, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy as resiliency factors present in high achieving, predominantly first generation college students. Another factor contributing to resilience was identified as one's self-concept. As presented by Gordon (1996), self-concept is explained as specific beliefs about an individual's abilities. This indicated that a resilient person has a healthier sense of self-concept. These beliefs also include beliefs about the importance of goals, beliefs about control, and beliefs about environmental facilitation. Similarly, McMillan and Reed (1994) identified positive interpersonal relationships and individual factors such as goal setting, intrinsic motivation, internal locus of control and high self-efficacy to be facets of resiliency. Through various studies, parental support and encouragement has been found to be an essential component of student resiliency (Cavazos, et. al, 2010; Morales, 2008; Ceja, 2004; Reisberg, 1999; McMillan & Reed, 1994).

Research identified environmental traits which included responsibility, conscientiousness, friendliness, and interpersonal sensitivity. Resilient students demonstrate superior cognitive and academic success, as well as a propensity to cooperate with teachers and spend more time studying. Morales (2008) identified multiple protective factors in a study of successful first generation Dominican American students which included internal locus of control, empowering reaction to obstacles, supportive teachers, membership in college organizations, above average cognitive ability, high self-confidence, strong work ethic, independence, desire to leave local area, effective use of support system, strict parenting style, and religious involvement.

Ceja (2004) indicated that Chicana students had found strength in their everyday challenges and realities and those of their parents. A study of eleven, first-generation Hispanic

college students multiple coping responses which contributed to resiliency were identified including positive reframing, acceptance of some challenges, positive self-talk, maintaining focus on long term goals, using the low expectations from others as motivation, self-reflection, taking a proactive approach, and seeking support (Cavazos, Johnson, & Sparrow, 2010).

Bandura (1977, 1982, & 1986) defined self-efficacy as a self-evaluation of one's competence to successfully execute a course of action necessary to reach desired outcomes. As cited in Johnson (2006), individuals with high self-efficacy utilize their intrinsic motivation to "press forward" through tasks. Similar to resiliency, self-efficacy is a multidimensional construct which should be measured in relation to specific contexts or outcome domains such as academic settings (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996). Measuring an individual's academic self-efficacy versus their global self-efficacy focuses on students' confidence in their ability to complete tasks, assignments, and degree attainment. Researchers have found specific measures of academic self-efficacy predicted academic outcomes more closely than generalized self-efficacy (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Ferrari and Parker, 1992; Lindley & Borgen, 2002). A positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance has been found and more importantly a relation to the academic performance of first year college students. Repeatedly, student grades, persistence, and number of hours studying, all key academic outcomes of success, have been found to be strongly related to academic self-efficacy (Bong, 2001; Brown, Lent, & Larkin, 1989; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984, 1986, 1987; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Torres & Solberg, 2001; Zhang & RiCharde, 1998).

Bandura (1993) indicated that students with strong self-efficacy were further motivated to persist through academic challenges and access necessary resources to succeed. Solberg and Villareal (1997) found self-efficacy to account for 27 percent of the variance in college adjustment. The authors suggested self-efficacy expectations to influence the way stressful situations are experienced. Students with high self-efficacy were reported to experience "positive perception of university environment, increased cultural congruity, and decreased perceived educational barrier" (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005, p. ?). An individual's self-efficacy is fostered when positive messages are attached to internal and external values (Johnson, 2006). Interesting, but not surprising, is the influence of familial support on self-efficacy which consequently influences a student's academic persistence (Torres & Solberg, 2001; Gloria, et al., 2005). The results of a study by Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) concluded that continued-generation college students achieved better academic results than did first-generation students. They suggested that despite a level of self-efficacy, first-generation college students did not perform as well as the continued-generation group. Although the results may not have shown a significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic outcomes, self-efficacy has the potential to affect long-term college outcomes, and could translate to an impact on persistence in college (Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols, 2007).

Research on persistence, has evolved into two theoretical models: Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Student Attrition Model. According to Tinto, a lack of congruency between student and their chosen campus is responsible for attrition. Students reach for a match between their motivation, and academic ability to a campus' social and academic features. As a result the higher the goal is for a student to complete their education, and the commitment from the institution, the greater the prospect of persisting at that institution (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993).

Bean's Student Attrition Model stresses the impact of beliefs that influence attitudes and by that means impact a student's behavioral intent. Different aspects of an institution affect a student's experiences, and these factors such as quality of courses, friends and the quality of the institution itself play an important part in attrition. Several variations of the model have been tested and have been found to support the idea that organizational, personal, and environmental variables influence persistence. Family approval plays a significant role as an environmental factor and can have both direct and indirect effects (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993).

There are some similarities between the two theories concerning organizational factors as well as institutional commitment. These factors include courses and academic assimilation in addition to institutional commitment, fit and quality (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993). However, the models differ on notions of academic performance and integration, which are derived from the Student Integration Model. Each model has its own perspective on student persistence. "The Student Integration Model suggest that academic integration, social integration, institutional commitment and, to some extent goal commitment exert the highest effect on persistence" (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993, p.124). Conversely, the Student Attrition Model attributes outcomes as a result of academic experiences and social psychological processes including a "form of family approval of institutional choice, friends' encouragement to continue enrollment, finance attitudes and perceptions about opportunity to transfer to other institutions on withdrawal decisions" (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993, p.126)

The Successful Latino/a Students Research Project (Zalaquett & Feliciano, 2004) was one study which focused primarily on first-generation Hispanic students. The project interviewed 12 successful students from an urban university's Latino scholarship program. Of the students selected (10 females and 2 males), 83 percent were the first in their family to attend college (Zalaquett, 2005). The authors identified eight factors common to successful students including family, the value of education, responsibility, accomplishment, friendship, financial aid, community support, and school personnel (Zalaquett & Feliciano, 2004).

In *Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students* (Warburton, Bugarin & Nunez, 2001), examined the role of academic preparation in the college experience of first-generation students. They found that students' high school curriculum was strongly associated with overall performance at the college level. As the rigor of pre-college coursework increased, the number of students who had to take one or more remedial college courses dropped from 21 percent to 3 percent (Warburton, et al., 2001). While taking a rigorous high school curriculum appeared to have a positive effect on first-generation students' persistence in college, the effect appears to be ameliorative rather than curative. The study also found that first-generation status persisted as a negative predictor.

METHODOLOGY

This study examined multiple facets of student success by exploring retention factors including resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence. A quantitative and qualitative method was utilized. The quantitative aspect explores significant differences between first-generation and continued generation college seniors in higher education. The variables studied during the quantitative portion consisted of resiliency, self-efficacy, persistence, and retention factors. In order to explore the relationship and influence of overall retention factors, the researcher utilized a demographic questionnaire, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), and the Proactive Attitude Scale.

Population and Sample

The study utilized data from first- and continued generation college seniors from a four-year academic institution in South Texas. Seniors were selected through random sampling. Student data was drawn from the university's database with IRB approval and the assistance of the Associate Vice President. The information collected included student identification number, gender, and ethnicity, College (Business, Education, Science and Technology, Liberal Arts), major, email address, senior credit hours, G.P.A., and first- or continued generation status. One hundred and sixty students participated in both the demographic questionnaire and the three surveys. The participant ethnicities were White (56.3%), Hispanic (30.0%), Asian (5.0%), Multi-Race/Ethnic (5.0%), African American (3.8%).

The quantitative portion of this study generated normative data and descriptive statistics of the populations sampled. The following research questions were answered:

1. What are the perceived retention factors associated with success for college seniors?
2. What are the perceived retention factors associated with success for first generation Hispanic students?
3. What is the relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of college seniors?
4. What is the relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of first generation Hispanic college seniors?

Identified dependent variables or factors for this study included results from the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), and the Proactive Attitude Scale. The factors measured by these scales included resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence, respectively. Responses to these measurements were in Likert-scale format and treated as interval scale data. Additionally, basic demographic and contact information were obtained through the web-based survey interface. The independent variable identified for this study was the student's reported college generational status as grouped by first- and continued-generation.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed to obtain demographic information. Students responded to questions of gender, ethnic background, G.P.A., college credit hours, college major, identification of first- or continued-generation status, number of hours spent on extracurricular activities, likelihood of attending graduate school, and student employment status. Open-ended questions focused on what the student found to be helpful to being successful at their current university.

Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (CD-RISC)

The CD-RISC contains 25 items, each carry a 5-point range of responses. "The CD-RISC is a brief, self-rated measure of resilience that has sound psychometric properties." (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 81). The Likert scale is as follows: not true at all (0), rarely true (1), sometimes true (2), often true (3), and true nearly all the time (4). The scale rates how the subject has felt over the past month. The total score ranges from 0-100 with higher scores

reflecting greater resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The CD-RISC has shown high potential in measuring resilience. A 10-item version of the CD-RISC was utilized in this study with a total score ranging from 0-40 with higher scores indicating greater resilience.

New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE)

Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash, and Kern define general self-efficacy (GSE) as an individuals' belief in their ability to perform well in a variety of situations. It has been the subject of increasing research attention (2006). This assessment was designed to measure general self-efficacy. The measure is comprised of eight items and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale where scores range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. High scores on this measure indicate higher levels of GSE. The initial psychometric evidence for this measure is positive (Chen et al., 2001; Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004).

Proactive Attitude Scale

Proactive Attitude (PA) is a personality characteristic that has consequence for motivation and action and referred to as persistence in this study. This includes several aspects such as resourcefulness, responsibility, values, and vision. The measure was comprised of eight items and rated on a 4-point Likert scale where scores range from not at all, barely true, moderately true, and exactly true. The psychological construct of proactive attitude (PA) is unrelated to other individual difference variables. Individual variables such as locus of control, self-determination, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy are strongly associated however, are theoretically unique. A correlation between GSE and PA was found at $r = .56$.

Data Collection

The researcher utilized *SurveyMonkey*, a survey website, to create and distribute the questionnaire and instruments. A letter of introduction was emailed to all potential college senior participants addressing the purpose and objectives of the study, assuring participants of confidentiality, and inviting students to participate in the study by clicking on the survey monkey link.

Qualitative Portion of the Study

The qualitative portion of the study allowed Hispanic, first- and continued-generation college seniors an opportunity to share their experiences that have led to the success of enrollment in their last year of college. The information that was gathered during the interviews provided insight to the experience of students who are actively fulfilling their dreams of pursuing a college degree. The experiences described in this portion of the study will serve as a foundation for further research that is focused on developing ways to retain college students, such as first-generation students, and assist them in completing their college education. Research questions addressed in the qualitative portion of this research include:

1. What retention factors and university activities have supported continued generation Hispanic college seniors?

2. What retention factors and university activities have supported first generation Hispanic college seniors?

Case Selection

Participants for the qualitative component of this study were selected from the Hispanic population who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed. The researcher focused on exploring the successful experiences of eight participants based on their scores in the quantitative portion of the study to gain further insight and depth. Further details of participant selection and narrative summaries of each individual will be provided.

Considerations were taken to select participants whose interviews would generate rich data for the study. Case selection in a mixed methodology presents the first opportunity to connect the quantitative and the qualitative data (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, & Petska, 2004). The first step included examining the low and high scores from the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), and the Proactive Attitude Scale. Participants from the Hispanic population who had scores that ranked in the top high and low end were contacted based on their consent to complete an interview. Contact was made via email and telephone calls to inquire if participants were still willing to take part in the interview process of the study.

A total of 8 participants were selected by the researcher from the 48 Hispanic college seniors, 5 female and 3 male, first- and continued generation students. A letter addressing the selection process, goals, and purpose of the qualitative portion of the study was provided. All eight of the selected participants agreed to complete the interviews. One participant was unable to meet, therefore interviewed via telephone. The other 7 participants scheduled interviews on campus.

Purpose of the Interview

The purpose of the interview process was to further explore the outcomes of the quantitative portion of the study. This component afforded the opportunity to explore challenges and factors contributing to the success of Hispanic college seniors. Their voices gave meaning to the experience of college life and helped gain insight into their journey of pursuing a college degree.

RESULTS

The goal of this study was to identify, compare, and explore resiliency, self-efficacy, and persisting characteristics of successful first-generation and continued generation college seniors with an emphasis on Hispanics.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity was reported on seven categories: White, Asian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, African American, Native American, and Multi-Race/Ethnic. The most frequent was White (56.3%), followed by Hispanic (30.0%), Asian (5.0%), Multi-Race/Ethnic (5.0%), African American (3.8%). All participants except one reported their ethnicity (See Table 1 in Appendix).

Gender

Females accounted for 74.4% of the total participants. Males accounted for 25.6% of the participants. Of the 48 reported Hispanic individuals, there were 36 females (75.0%) and 12 males (25.0%). All participants except one did not report gender, as presented in Table 2 (Appendix).

Grade Point Average

According to student self-reports, 6.3% of the participants had a GPA between a 2.0 and a 2.5, 20.9% were between 2.5 and 3.0, 38.6% were between 3.0 and 3.5, 34.2% were between 3.5 and 4.0. No respondents had GPA's below a 2.0 or below. Of the 48 Hispanic students who responded to this question, 21 (43.8%) reported an average GPA ranging from a 3.0 to a 3.5, followed by 18 (37.5%) with an average of 2.5 to 3.0 GPA, 8 (16.7%) with an average 3.5 to 4.0 GPA, and 1 (2.1%) with an average 2.0-2.5 GPA. All but three participants did not report a GPA. Table 3 (Appendix) presents the information described.

Table 4 (Appendix) presents the means and standard deviations of retention factors including self-efficacy, resiliency, and persistence (proactive) of first and continued generation college seniors, across ethnicities, and Hispanic students. The means and standard deviations of these retention factors were relatively similar across ethnicities and Hispanic students who were first and continued generation. By comparison, the resiliency mean across ethnicities for continued generation participants was $M = 28.29$ and first generation $M = 28.89$. The means for Hispanic continued generation participants was $M = 29.38$ and first generation $M = 28.29$. Self-efficacy means across ethnicities for continued generation participants was $M = 26.99$ and first generation $M = 27.33$. The means for self-efficacy of Hispanic continued generation participants was $M = 27.41$ and first generation $M = 27.97$. Persistence means across ethnicities for continued generation participants was $M = 27.25$ and first generation $M = 27.20$. The means for persistence of Hispanic continued generation participants was $M = 28.81$ and first generation $M = 27.00$. All students in this sample have similar levels of resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence. As indicated on Table 4 there is small variability between the means of resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence factors.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to investigate the differences between self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence (also referred to as retention factors) associated with success for college seniors and Hispanic students. Data was screened to ensure model assumptions for a one-way analysis of variance including independence, normality, and homogeneity of variance. The results of the first ANOVA evaluated the effects of self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence (dependent variables) on college seniors (independent variable). Main effects revealed that retention factors were not statistically significant among college seniors who were first or continued generation, $F(1, 151) = .070$, $p < .05$. An additional ANOVA that focused on the effects of self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence (dependent variables) on Hispanic students (independent variables) was conducted. Similarly, retention factors for Hispanic students, first or continued generation, were not statistically significant, $F(1, 44) = .163$, $p < .05$. No post hoc tests were conducted as no statistical significance was found between the factors.

Qualitative Findings

Eight participants in the study consisted of 5 female and 3 male students, 4 first generation and 4 continued generation Hispanic college seniors. The six themes emerging from within the group include: resilience, family support, university support system, difficulty adjusting to college life, personal traits, and family expectations. The following table presents the themes with supporting key terms.

In summary, the means between self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence across ethnicities (and for Hispanic first and continued generation college seniors) were relatively similar and not statistically significant. Results from the one way analysis of variance reflected no significant relationship or main effects between the three retention factors.

A total of 160 college seniors consented to participating in the study. Forty-eight participants self-identified as Hispanic college students. The quantitative results indicated the means of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), and the Proactive Attitude Scale were relatively similar, showing minimal variance across ethnicities and Hispanic college seniors. Results from the analysis of variance were not statistically significant. No significant relationship or main effect was identified between the three retention factors of resilience, self-efficacy, and persistence. According to cross tabulations which compare frequency results of categorical data, friends and career were identified as most encouraging factors to completing a college degree. While no statistical significance was found between the three factors for all participants and Hispanic students, the qualitative interviews provided a unique insight and perspective into the college experience.

The six themes emerging from the eight qualitative interviews with Hispanic college seniors included resilience, family support, university support systems, and difficulty adjusting to college life, personal traits, and family expectations. Participants found that many of these factors influenced their success through their senior year of college. However, the life experience of each individual was distinct. After conducting the interviews and reviewing the themes, the researcher concluded that the dream of higher education can become reality for first- and continued-generation college students.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that success factors such as resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence were similar without any significant difference between students with parents who have a college degree and students with parents who do not have a college degree. Both first-generation and continued-generation students who chose to participate in the study demonstrated a GPA ranging from 3.0 to 4.0 which could explain the no significance difference in mean score on the scales that measured resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence. This could explain that students who succeed to their senior year in college have learned to adapt and adjust to college life and have developed a high sense of resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence. Institutions of higher education can share research and learn from one another. This can lead to discovery about students' transition from their first year experience to their senior year to better understand more about the identified variables. With this understanding a comparison can be made of the levels of resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence for freshman compared to seniors already attending the university. Exit interviews, focusing on these factors, of students who have dropped out could

also provide universities with information on how to prevent dropout rates from increasing and retaining our students in order for them to prevail to graduation.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to provide insight into resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence play a role in student success. This study explored the relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence and how they affected college seniors who were either first- or continued-generation college seniors with an emphasis on Hispanic first and continued generation seniors. The literature revealed that students, especially first-generation students lack college knowledge which forces them to drop out within the first year of college (Ceballo, 2004; Fuligni, 1997; Zalaquett & Feliciano, 2004).

This study suggested preparation of Hispanic students should begin as early as high school with school counselors providing much needed fostering of student strengths and college direction. College counselors could identify Hispanic students who are at risk for dropping out, and then emphasize assets that have helped other first-generation students to progress to their senior year. The quantitative findings concluded that there was no significant difference between continuing and first generation students within combined factors of resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined success factors such as resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence and how it relates to student success. Recommendations for future research include: a) Replicating this study at other universities to determine how they are helping first-generation Hispanic students to persist beyond the first year and in to their senior year of college and b) Conducting comparative research with first-year students and assets to succeed to senior level students.

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Table 1
Participant Ethnicity

Race	Response Percent	Response Count
White	56.2%	90
Asian	5.0%	8
Hispanic	30.0%	48
Black	3.8%	6
Multi-Ethnic	5.0%	8
Total	100%	160

Note. One participant did not respond.

Table 2
Participant Gender

Gender	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	74.4%	119
Male	25.6%	41
Total	100%	160

Note. One participant did not respond.

Table 3
Estimated GPA's of Participants

GPA	Response Percent	Response Count
2.0-2.5	6.3%	10
2.5-3.0	20.9%	33
3.0-3.5	38.6%	61
3.5-4.0	34.2%	54
Below 2.0	0.0%	0
Total	100%	158

Note. Three participants did not respond.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Resiliency, Self-Efficacy, and Persistence Factors

	Factor	n	M	SD
Total				
Continued Generation	Resiliency	67	28.29	5.72
	Self-efficacy	70	26.99	6.81
	Proactive	69	27.25	5.53
First Generation	Resiliency	82	28.89	5.35
	Self-efficacy	88	27.33	6.07
	Proactive	87	27.20	5.12
Hispanic				
Continued Generation	Resiliency	15	29.38	5.63
	Self-efficacy	17	27.41	4.36
	Proactive	16	28.81	3.49
First Generation	Resiliency	29	28.29	5.78
	Self-efficacy	31	27.97	5.31
	Proactive	31	27.00	4.64

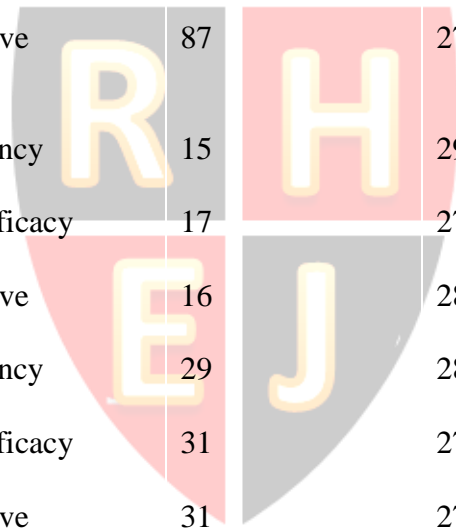


Table 5
Six Themes

<p style="text-align: center;">Family Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Brother • Push • Drive • Support • Not disappoint 	<p style="text-align: center;">University Support System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professors • Instructors • Teacher assistant • Upward Bound • Tutoring center • Writing center 	<p style="text-align: center;">Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dreams • Focused • Persisted • Goals • Adjust • Learning
<p style="text-align: center;">Difficulty Adjusting to College Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard • Stuck • Unprepared • Survive • Struggled • Work things out • Feel weird 	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard worker • Perfectionist • Stubborn • Motivated • Persistent • Enjoy a challenge • Will 	<p style="text-align: center;">Family Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not want to let them down • Brother was successful • A lot of pressure • Did not have a choice • Had to do