THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE COLLEGE CHOICE OF HISPANIC COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Jessica J. Ranero

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APPROVED:

__________________________________________
Joan B. Hirt, chairperson

__________________________________________     _____________________________
Patricia Hyer       Delores Scott

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The Factors that Influence the College Choice of Hispanic College Students

Jessica J. Ranero

(ABSTRACT)

The United States has undergone a dramatic demographic shift in the last 40 years, particularly in terms of the racial and ethnic composition of the country. Like the other racial and ethnic minority groups, the Hispanic population is also a rapidly increasing segment of the United States. These shifts have affected many of the country’s social institutions. For example, primary and secondary education have experienced a dramatic demographic shift in terms of race and ethnicity in the last 20 years.

Higher education has also been affected by demographic shifts in the U.S. Although the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities enrolled in college have increased, that growth has not been proportionate to the changing numbers in the United States’ population. For example, in 1990 the census reported over 22 million Hispanics in the U.S., or 9% of the total population, yet the 724,600 Hispanic students enrolled in higher education represented only 6% of all students in college (“College Enrollment,” 1998; “We the American…Hispanics”, 1993).

These gaps between Hispanic growth in the general population and Hispanic college enrollment are due to several factors, including the college choice process. Currently, research on Hispanic college choice is limited.

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the college choice process for Hispanic students. Data were collected by administering the College Choice Survey (CCS), an instrument designed specifically for this study.
A total of 383 surveys were mailed and 144 surveys were completed and returned by respondents. This reflected a response rate of 38%. A total of 65 ANOVAs were run on the data elicited from participants. Five ANOVAs were run on the subscales, which included total College Choice Survey scores, Internal Search scores, Internal Selection scores, External Search scores, and External Selection scores. The dependent variables were gender, generational status, and ethnic background. A total of three significant differences were found among these five ANOVAs.

The remaining 60 ANOVAs examined differences reported by respondents on the last two items in the survey. These items asked participants to rate the degree to which they used sources of support for both the search and selection processes. The ANOVAs were run for differences by main effect only (i.e. gender, generational status, and ethnic background). Results revealed a total of three significant differences on the sources of support participants used during the search process and a total of four significant differences among the sources of support respondents used during the selection process.

In summary, this study was valuable because it contributed to the understanding of the college choice process of Hispanic students. The results of this study revealed both pragmatic and significant differences in the college choice process of Hispanic students by gender, generational status, and ethnic background. Higher education administrators may strive to better understand the differences in the college choice process of Hispanic students and consider these differences in designing recruitment and admissions efforts.
Dedication

Para mis abuelas, tías, y mama.

I am a descendant of strong and knowledgeable women that sacrificed their dreams so that I and others would not have to. You are all an inspiration.

Gracias!
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I want to acknowledge and thank several people who have made it possible for me to complete this study.

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