

Factors Influencing Latino Dropouts

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Research Question

What barriers impact Latino student enrollment, retention, and graduation in post-secondary education?

Abstract

“Where are you from? Where were you born? You speak good English! Can you teach me Spanish?” Has anybody ever asked you one of these questions? If so, did it make you feel like you’re not American, or less intelligent? These are just a few examples of a recently understood issue known as microaggressions, and microaggressions are just one of a handful of reasons why Latino students struggle to enroll in and complete postsecondary education. Another reason has to do with financial concerns. As we began our research, having grown up in a Latino community, we knew that poverty also played a role in whether students entered or remained in college. In fact, Davila and Michaels (2016) describe this in their research. They explain that “according to the Pew Hispanic Research Center, 37.3 percent of poor children were Latino “and these constant “economic constraints hinder Latino children’s academic success;” illustrating how poverty really impacts a person’s opportunities- young or old. Continuing our research into some of the influences that cause Latinos to fail to enroll in college or leave without finishing their degree, we discovered that there are a plethora of influences that impact Latino success in higher education. This poster will explore not only microaggressions and poverty, but also family and cultural influences. It will explore the pressure associated with making an immigrant parents’ sacrifice worth it, some barriers associated with language, and financial discouragement related to attaining a postsecondary education. Last but not least, it will explore some new trends in Latino education and the positive impact that this could have on the growing Latino community in the United States.

Method

The researchers used a couple of methods to gather information. First, they utilized Ferris State University’s online databases given the key terms listed below. After gathering information and completing a literature review, the researchers used testimonies and personal anecdotes from friends, family, acquaintances to validate the literature currently in the field.

Key Terms

- Latino
- Dropout
- Retention
- Education
- College



Literature Review

We learned that there are four main areas that affect Latino success in postsecondary endeavors:

1.Cultural Differences: Our research revealed that cultural differences are a big impact in how Latinos succeed in college (Davila and Michaels, 2016). For example, many Latino families come to America as migrant workers and it is difficult for them to adjust to the norms and customs of American society.

2. Language Barriers: Language barriers also impact Latino dropout rates. Many Latino students who are enrolled in college struggle because English is not their native language and the Academic English required for college can be very different than the English they used at home or in high school; there are often many words they have never seen before. Due to this struggle, it is difficult for the Latino students to perform at their best in the college classroom. This also plays a role when communicating and building relationships with others on the campus and it is compounded with low numbers of Latino students on the campus. This disconnect can also influence student success because they do not feel comfortable reaching out to professors and other students for help.



3. Economic/Financial Factors: It is a little known fact that childhood poverty is disproportionately high among Latino communities. According to Davila and Michaels (2016) more Latino children, 6.1 million in 2010, were living in poverty than children of any other racial or ethnic group. This number is largely impacted by the number of Latino children being raised in immigrant parent households. In fact, two- thirds of the 6.1 million impoverished Latino children in 2010, were children of immigrant parents. This can negatively impact a students academic success because of the limited resources that immigrant parents have to offer. Such examples include limited communication skills and lack of understanding of the American educational system.

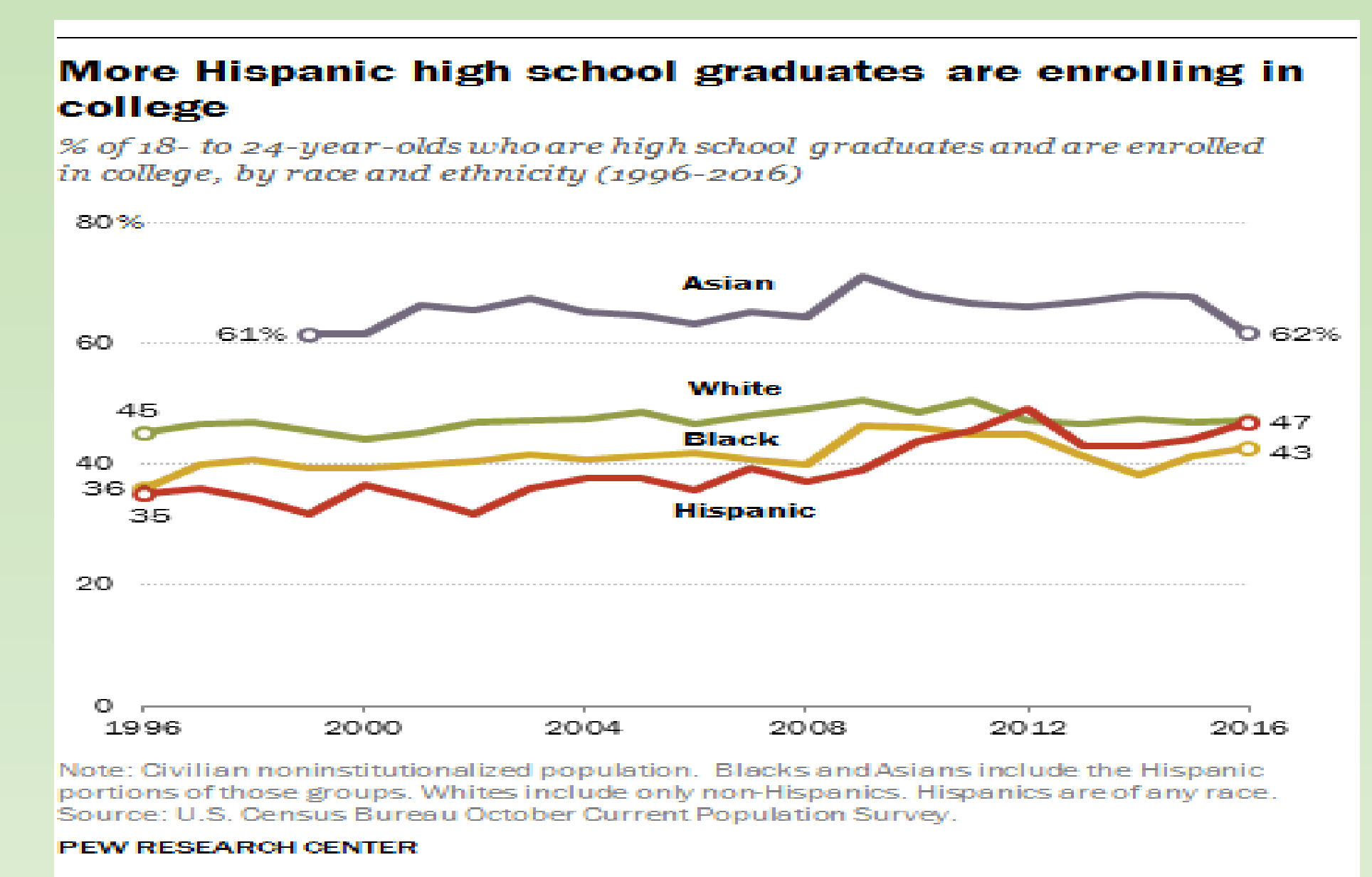
4. Prejudice/Discrimination/Microaggression

You speak good English. Can you teach me Spanish? Where were you born?

These are just a few examples of what is referred to as a *microaggression*. Pierce (1970) explained that microaggression is the notion that specific interactions between those of different races and cultures are often problematic and can result in demeaning and insulting non-Whites. These insults are often subconscious, and subtle. However, as a result, many people of color are negatively impacted and often must live with this type of behavior in their daily lives. As a result, these microaggressions can and do take a toll on the education of Black and Latino children. Ford et. al. (2013) explained that when Latino and Black students are exposed to microaggression, they begin to second guess their ability to succeed in their educational lives. As a result, underrepresentation and underachievement are prevalent in communities of color.

Discussion

Through our research, we were able to obtain a better understanding of the recent educational trends that have been taking place in the Latino community. A recent trend that has been taking place is the increase in college enrollment among college age Latinos.



According to the Pew Research Center, in 2016, 47 percent of Hispanic (Latino) students ages 18-24 years old are enrolled in college. This is a 32 percent increase from the year 1999. Also, a record 3.6 million Hispanics were enrolled in public and private colleges in 2016. When compared to the year 1999 this is a 180 percent increase!

Resources

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