What are college barriers?

- A college barrier is a factor that inhibits a person from attending college. (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004)
- Perceived barriers include:
  - Low socioeconomic status (SES), lack of financial resources, (Burnell, 2003; Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004).
  - Family status (Irvin et al., 2012).
  - Low self-efficacy and beliefs (McWhiter et al., 2007; Saunders, 2009).
  - Poor academic performance (Ramos & Sanchez, 1995).
  - Family, parent education, family history (Saunders, 2009).
  - Cost, value, and persistence (Kenny et al., 2003; Irvin et al., 2012).

Procedure and Measures

Participants

Participants were students in Grades 6-12 \((N = 514)\) who attended middle and high schools in one school district located in rural, central Appalachia \((49.6\% \text{ female, 50.4\% male, 98.2\% White, 1.8\% Other})\). 60\% of students reported that neither of their parents completed a four year college degree and were subsequently identified in the study as first-generation students. The remaining 39.8\% of students were unsure or reported that one parent had completed a four year degree.

Purpose of the Study

To explore the perceived barriers faced by rural Appalachian students in Grades 6-12 and examine whether reported barriers differ by gender and/or parent education level.

Analyses and Results

One-way ANOVA and MANOVA Analysis

- A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the most highly rated perceived college barriers among participants.
- The following barriers were statistically significant for all participants: value and benefit, \(F(1,432) = 4.983, p = .026\), and family/social ties, \(F(1,432) = 15.981, p < .001\).
- These results were supported by previous literature that found students who reported having minimal amounts of barriers, also reported having high levels of family support (Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003).
- A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test for mean differences in reported college barriers among students based on gender and first-generation status.
- There was a statistically significant difference among boys and girls for the barriers of persistence, \(F(1,432) = 5.332, p = .021\) and value and benefit, \(F(1,432) = 23.398, p < .001\).
- There are statistically significant differences regarding cost among first-generation and non-first generation students.
- The MANOVA results also revealed a statistically significant difference among first-generation students and non-first generation students regarding cost as a barrier, \(F(1,432) = 15.981, p < .001\).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample Item</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistence/Difficulty</td>
<td>I don’t think I can do well in college.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value and Benefit</td>
<td>I can learn everything I need to know on the job.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>I will not be able to find enough scholarship money or financial aid to attend college.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Social Ties</td>
<td>It will be too difficult to take care of other family members if I go to college.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings, Conclusions, & Limitations

- There is evidence that the value and benefit of a college education and family/social ties are barriers faced by rural Appalachian students when deciding to apply for college.
- There are differences among boys and girls for the barriers of persistence/difficulty and also value and benefit.
- Among potential first-generation and non-first generation students, there are differences regarding cost as a college barrier.
- One limitation of the study is a lack of racial diversity (98.2\%, White).
- Another limitation of the study is missing data for 64 students regarding their first-generation status.

References