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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

PREDICTORS OF COLLEGE SOCIAL INTEGRATION
IN A HISPANIC POPULATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

RICHARD KENNEL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years minority recruitment programs have begun to show success in attracting larger numbers of Hispanic students to colleges and universities. However, similar success is yet to be seen in retention figures for those same students. According to a recent study, only 20.4 percent of Hispanic college students graduated within a six year time span, compared with 43.9 percent of Anglo students (Astone, & Nunez-Wormack, 1990). It is imperative that institutions of higher learning focus attention on improving minority student persistence as well as recruitment. In order to do that, the determinants of college persistence and adjustment must be identified.

According to previous research, only 12% of college student persistence can be accounted for by high school grades alone (Tinto, 1987), leaving another 88% unaccounted for. A number of theories have been put forward which attempt to account for the unexplained portion of persistence behavior (Darden & Kuhn, 1985; Metzner & Bean, 1987; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975, 1987), but Tinto's (1975) model remains the most frequently cited and tested of all the persistence theories, and provided a theoretical basis

for the present study. The basic thesis of Tinto's theory asserts that a student, in order to persist until graduation must pass through three critical stages: separation from family, transition from the former environment into the college environment, and integration into college life.

Tinto was influenced by Durkheim's theory of suicide (cited in Tinto, 1988) which states that a person who is not integrated into society is left without guiding norms or beliefs and is at high risk for suicide (i.e., dropping out of life). Tinto theorized that through a similar process a student may successfully separate from the family and from the former high school environment, but if that person never becomes fully socially integrated into college life, it is very likely that he or she will drop out.

Many factors may directly or indirectly influence a student's integration into the college community; however, the current study was limited to three factors within a Hispanic student population: perceived availability of family support, cultural identity, and frequency of visits home. By identifying some of the factors that either contribute to, or detract from, a student's ability to fit into the campus culture, students who may be at risk for integration difficulties can be identified and early intervention strategies can be implemented. In addition, institutions can identify and rectify those barriers in the campus environment which may hinder minority students from

full social integration and, ultimately, graduation. Two barriers that can impede social integration are social stress and one's level of confidence for engaging in social interactions at college (social efficacy).

Tinto (1975, 1987) divided integration into two components, social and academic; the present inquiry was concerned exclusively with the social component of integration. The two barriers to social integration which were assessed are social stress and social efficacy. The predictor variables chosen represent a combination of elements, two of which (family support and visits home) may influence students from both majority and minority cultures, and a third (cultural identity) which may, alone or in combination, exert an influence on only minority students.

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which perceived availability of family support, cultural identity, and frequency of visits home would predict social integration for a Hispanic student population. More specifically, it was hypothesized that higher levels of perceived availability of family support would predict lower social stress and higher social efficacy. A second hypothesis was that stronger identification with the majority culture would predict lower social stress and higher social efficacy. Finally, it was hypothesized that a higher number of visits home would predict higher levels of social stress and lower social efficacy.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter will review the relevant literature in order to provide a historical and theoretical foundation for the present study. Tinto's model of college persistence will be examined, the concept of social integration will be explored, and previous studies which have used his model will be looked at. The predictor variables in this study, family support, cultural identity, and frequency of visits home, will be discussed in light of previous research. Finally, barriers to social integration in college will be examined in relation to the measures of social stress and social efficacy.

Tinto's Model of Persistence

Vincent Tinto made a significant contribution to the study of the dropout behavior of college students when he synthesized existing research into an explanatory conceptual model of persistence behavior (Tinto, 1975). Tinto theorized that adjustment to college is a key factor in predicting whether or not a student will persist until graduation from college. His model of persistence rests on the assumption that in order to successfully adjust to college life, students must separate themselves from their

families of origin and high school culture, make the transition into a new and different culture, and eventually become integrated into college life.

Tinto's (1975, 1987) concepts of separation, transition, and integration are rooted in the writings of Arthur Van Gennep, an early twentieth century Dutch anthropologist. In his book Rites of Passage, Van Gennep (1908/1960) describes a process common to most cultures which marks a step-wise transition whereby an individual moves from membership in one group into another, from one spiritual state to another, or from one territory to another. Some familiar rites of passage are transitions from youth to adulthood, from secular status to priesthood, or from single to married. Most rites of passage contain three common characteristics which are identifiable across cultures, and which are still marked by ceremonial rituals in many cultures today. These are the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation (Van Gennep, 1960 pp. 10-11).

The first step of the passage, separation, occurs when the one embarking on the passage disengages from his or her original group and loosens the ties that had previously bound him or her to that group. In the case of an adolescent boy in a tribal community, for instance, he may separate himself from his home and friends and temporarily leave the village in order to spend time with the older men of the tribe. This point of separation signals the

relinquishment forever of his childhood relationships with family and friends.

The second stage, transition, occurs after the separation when the young man would undergo a transition period with the older men during which he would relate as neither boy nor man, but as a novitiate. It is during this time of transition that he would learn from the older men the knowledge and practice of the customs that define manhood in their culture.

The final stage Van Gennep describes is incorporation into the new group. When the initiate returns again to his community, it is in a new and different role. Now as a full member of the society of adult men, the newly initiated one is expected to interact in new ways with the other men of the tribe, and while he may still retain contact with his family and former friends, it is clearly a different relationship.

Tinto (1988) likens the rites of passage described by Van Gennep to the process of college persistence. For the college student, the three-stage process would mean separation from parents, transition from the world of high school life and activities to the world of college, and finally integration (incorporation) into college life as a full member of the college community. For the young boy in a tribal culture, the different steps taken in order to become fully integrated into the adult world are clearly

defined and marked by rituals. The college student's journey toward integration into college life is not so clearly defined.

Social Integration

Tinto's (1975, 1987) assertion that integration is positively related to persistence is a key point in his theory. Anyone entering college is forced to make numerous lifestyle adjustments in order to become integrated into college life, however a certain number of students who are never able to integrate eventually drop out. Tinto states that, contrary to what might be expected, less than 15 percent of institutional departures are due to academic dismissal. He goes on to say that most departures are voluntary and are not due to compulsory measures taken by the institution. "Rather than mirroring academic difficulties, they [voluntary departures] reflect the character of the individual's social and intellectual experiences within the institution following entry. Specifically, they mirror the degree to which those experiences serve to integrate individuals into the social and intellectual life of the institution" (Tinto, 1987, p. 53). If these voluntary departures actually are a reflection of whether or not these experiences have helped to integrate students into college life, then it would be important to study the effects of those experiences, and

more specifically, which students are most likely to be adversely affected by them.

The more the student sees these social experiences as satisfying and leading to the student's integration into college life, the greater will be the student's commitment to the institution and to graduation from that institution (Tinto, 1987). This increased integration and subsequent commitment, according to Tinto, increases the likelihood of persistence until graduation.

Tinto provides further support for the importance of integration with Durkheim's theory of suicide (Cited in Tinto, 1988). According to Durkheim, an individual who is not integrated into society is left in a state of "normlessness" (Tinto, 1988, p. 442), and is at a higher risk for suicide. A student making the transition into college life is in danger of becoming stranded in a normless state between high school and college if the integration process fails. Lacking a sense of belonging to a community, the student is likely to commit academic "suicide" by dropping out.

In Tinto's terms, the lack of social integration, or fit, stems from two roots: incongruence and isolation (Tinto, 1987). Incongruence refers to a state of being at odds with the institution, or a lack of fit between the individual and the college community. More specifically, Tinto asserts that "social incongruence tends to mirror a

mismatch between the social values, preferences and/or behavioral styles of the person and those which characterize other members of the institution" (p. 56). This experience of not fitting in comes as a result of formal and informal interactions between the student and members of the university, whether they be students, faculty or staff.

Whereas incongruence results from interactions between the student and members of the institution, isolation, as the term implies, results from a lack of interaction. If a student finds himself or herself at odds with the dominant culture of the institution, the response may be withdrawal, thereby shielding the student from further social interaction and integration.

According to Tinto, integration may be influenced directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, by a number of factors which he labels "pre-entry attributes" (Tinto, 1987). These factors, which include things such as family background, skills, and prior schooling, may not be directly related to the college experience itself, but can affect the integration process by influencing the level of incongruity experienced, or the tendency to feel the need to isolate. The three pre-entry attributes of perceived availability of family support, level of cultural identity, and frequency of visits home will be tested as predictors of social integration in this study.

Tests of Tinto's Model

The introduction of Tinto's theory of college student persistence provided researchers with a solid theoretical model from which developed numerous studies of the college dropout process (Darden & Kuhn, 1985; Murguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Nora, 1987; Nora & Rendon, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, 1979).

Pascarella and Terenzini's study in 1979 helped early on to establish the connection between integration and persistence. In their study of voluntary freshman withdrawal decisions, they found social and academic integration together accounted for a significant amount of the total variance in persistence behavior.

Although Tinto's (1975) model includes as major pre-entry attributes family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling, it does not specify what role ethnicity might play. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979), while recognizing ethnicity as a pre-entry attribute, coded "racial/ethnic origin" as either non-minority or minority (p. 199). Nora (1987), in a study which showed a positive link between social integration and student persistence in a Chicano population did not include ethnicity as one of the variables under investigation.

While Nora's 1987 study did not include ethnicity, Nora and Rendon (1990), in a study based on Tinto's model, added ethnic origin to the list of pre-entry attributes. While

social integration was found to be positively related to persistence, no significant relationship emerged for ethnicity. However, ethnicity in this case was a single level variable; no attempt was made to distinguish between differences in cultural identity.

Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991), in a naturalistic study designed to test Tinto's model, concluded that ethnicity can be an important element in the integration process. They also suggested that ethnic enclaves provide an initial point of integration into a smaller group, enabling the student to explore the broader spectrum of campus life as he or she feels ready. The authors also proposed three suggestions for adapting Tinto's theory: 1) include ethnicity as a "conditioning" element in the social integration process, 2) measure social integration with respect to enclaves, and not just the campus as a whole, and 3) data analysis should "reflect this underlying structure of campus life and pay particular attention to ethnic enclaves" (p. 436).

Although the broad notion of ethnicity is beginning to be incorporated into the research, no study based on Tinto's theory was found which takes into account the possible effects of different levels of cultural identity. Based on the assumption that ethnicity in and of itself is too broad a construct to be able to accurately account for significant variance in social integration, the present study further

divides the attribute of ethnicity into multiple levels of cultural identity.

Cultural Identity and Social Integration

Nora's addition of ethnicity to Tinto's model was a positive step toward recognizing the need to be able to apply the model to minority, as well as majority, students. Recently, stress has been shown to be a significant factor in psychological adjustment in Hispanic populations (Cervantes & Castro, 1985; Munoz, 1985; Vega, Hough, & Miranda, 1985; Vega & Kolody, 1985), and for college students, cultural identity may influence the college adjustment process.

Because most academic institutions are extensions of the dominant Anglo American culture, students from minority cultures must adapt their behavior within the institution in ways that are different from, and often in conflict with, their families and home communities (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989), thus creating a potential source of stress. According to Baptiste (1990), a common problem of adolescent Mexican American immigrants in therapy are loyalty binds which are created when the adolescent's desires and attempts to blend into the majority culture conflict with family cultural values.

Individuals reporting high levels of stress could be said to be experiencing a lack of "fit," or integration with the surrounding environment. Munoz (1985) suggests that

high levels of stress may be a key factor influencing the high rate of dropouts for Chicano students. A "general theme of insecurity" was found to be prevalent in Chicano students' responses to interviews, and alienation was frequently referred to "as an important personal problem" (p. 142). Given the variety of definitions and ways of viewing stress, Solberg, Falk, Valdez, and Villareal (1991) developed a stress instrument designed to assess stress induced by an external stimulus as well stress induced by perception of an event. This instrument accounts for both frequency of stressful life events, and also self-reported reaction to stressful events.

Cervantes and Castro (1985) proposed a stress model that endeavored to explain mediation of stress in the Mexican American population. Some of the important culture-related internal mediators in their model were language, level of acculturation, and adherence to traditional Mexican versus non-traditional values. They argue that "a key to understanding the etiology of psychological disorders is an identification of those person-environment interactions that are potentially stressful to the individual" (p. 10). In a similar vein, Vega, Hough, and Miranda (1985) identified culture and level of acculturation as background variables which influence the mediation of stress and influence mental health outcomes. They noted that although stress is universal, the experience is uniquely colored by the

influence of culture on the way each individual experiences the environment.

It can be seen from previous research that acculturation level or cultural identity ought to be considered as a possible influence on college social integration for Hispanic students. Nora's attempt to bring ethnicity into Tinto's model did not go far enough since it only looked at membership in an ethnic group, not at an individual's cultural identity. Therefore, the current study was designed to go a step further by considering levels of cultural identity in relation to social integration.

Availability of Family Support and Social Integration

Recent research has begun to focus not only on the severing of family ties during late adolescence and the college years, but also on the nature of the continuing parent-child relationship which remains intact throughout the separation process (Hoffmann, 1990; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Josselson, 1988; Kenny, 1987, 1990; Quintana & Lapsley, 1990; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). Kenny (1987) described family support as a secure base from which the young person can feel safe in exploring the new environment of college, knowing that he or she could always turn back to the family for help when needed. Josselson (1988) argued that the adolescent who remains securely attached to parents, rather than becoming totally independent, is better

equipped for the separation-individuation process and is more capable of adjusting to new situations. Taken together, these findings point to the importance of continuing family support being available to the adolescent who has left home and is attempting to establish his own identity in the new environment of college.

Family variables are seldom accounted for in psychological research on acculturation (Rueschenberg and Buriel, 1989). Familism has been described as a powerful factor within the Hispanic community (Cervantes & Castro, 1985), with reliance on the family for help and strong emotional ties being frequently recognized characteristics (Cervantes & Castro, 1985; Vega & Kolody, 1985; Quevedo-Garcia, 1987; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, and Perez-Stable, 1987; Markhides, Boldt, & Ray, 1986).

The ability of Hispanic families to adapt to changing cultural influences is noteworthy. Reuschenberg and Buriel (1989) noted that it is possible to view the Hispanic family as adapting to U.S. social systems while still retaining most of its internal characteristics which are cultural in nature (Reuschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Sabogal, et al. (1987), found three major factors in attitudes toward families in a Hispanic population: familial obligations, perceived support from the family, and family as referents. One of the most striking observations was that the high levels of perceived family support remain stable despite

changes in acculturation. They concluded, "The knowledge that problems can be jointly solved with family members and that support can always be found among relatives can be a much valued worldview that individuals may want to hold to even as they acculturate" (p. 409).

Familism has been seen as helping members to cope with social alienation and with other aversive external influences (Cervantes & Castro, 1985). Integration into the new environment of college can be a potentially aversive experience, and has been shown to be especially stressful for Chicano students (Munoz, 1985), making family support during this period a particularly important issue.

Frequency of Visits Home

Another possible predictor of social integration is the number of times a student visits home during the academic year. There are many reasons why a student might visit home, and not all reasons would necessarily inhibit college social integration, but two possible causes of interference with integration will be mentioned here. First, the simple fact of being away from the university would limit opportunities for interaction with other students, faculty, or staff. That lack of interaction could lead to failure to become socially integrated.

The second possible connection between lack of integration and visits home could be due to the fact that frequent visits home may be a symptom of other problems the

student is experiencing. Separation from parents has already been mentioned as a difficult process during this stage of life. Mooney, Sherman, and Lo Presto (1991), in a study of college adjustment, found that students who perceived that the distance between school and home was "just right" showed better adjustment than students who felt their school was either too close or too far from their home. This finding was taken to imply that the students who reported the distance home as "just right" had positive feelings about their separation.

Separation from the family of origin and the development of a sense of autonomy has been cited as one of the key tasks of adolescence (Erikson, 1963, 1965; Blos, 1979; Haley, 1980). The traditional American view is that the adolescent's task is to establish a psychological separation from his or her parents and to develop a sense of identity and autonomy as a separate individual (Hoffman, 1984; Newman & Newman, 1986; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990), but as mentioned above, separation is only part of the story. What might be termed successful, or healthy separation also involves the continuation of strong relationships along with separation, and must be assessed within its cultural context.

Rather than view student adjustment problems as rooted within the individual self, many researchers are examining the entire family system as a possible source of the

problem. Haley (1980) argued that most separation problems are manifestations of family problems. Times of change can be especially difficult for families that are not well equipped to handle change, and according to Haley (1980), "It is now appearing that, in any organization, the time of greatest change occurs when someone is entering the organization or leaving it" (p. 29). When a student attempts to leave for college, problems within the family system may arise which draw the student home again.

For many adolescents, attending college is the first major separation and a milestone toward independence. Several researchers have begun to explore the relationship between the separation process and college adjustment. Rice, Cole, and Lapsley (1990) found not independence, but positive feelings about separation to be a predictor of college adjustment. The authors of the study offered an explanation for the findings by stating that "Apparently, the successful management of the emotional responses to separation may be more important than independence, when confronted with the adaptational challenges of the college environment" (p. 201). Similar results were obtained by Lopez, Campbell, and Watkins (1988). These results seem to indicate that conflicted feelings about separation may tend to bring the student home, rather than lack of emotional independence.

Another problem that might be indicated by frequent visits home is that the student may be experiencing a highly stressful environment on campus, and visiting home may be a way of avoiding the stress. On the other hand, students who do not feel capable of engaging in the social behavior necessary to fit in on campus may choose frequent visits home as a way of isolating themselves. Frequent visits home, while not inherently a problem, may be an indicator of other problems the student is experiencing.

Barriers to Social Integration

Given the importance of social integration with regard to persistence behavior, the question arises as to what barriers might exist which would inhibit a student's social integration. Tinto (1987) addresses this question by postulating two primary sources, or roots, of the lack of integration, which have been mentioned previously: incongruence and isolation. He defines incongruence as "that state where individuals perceive themselves as being substantially at odds with the institution," and isolation as "the absence of sufficient interactions whereby integration may be achieved" (p. 53). While acknowledging that the two concepts of incongruence and isolation are related, and that indeed, one may induce the other, Tinto makes a clear distinction between the two. He states that "the former [incongruence] arises from interactions and the person's evaluation of the character of those interactions,

the latter [isolation] results from the absence of interactions" (p. 53).

Correlations can be drawn between the concepts of stress and efficacy, and Tinto's definitions of incongruence and isolation. Stress refers to demands or conflicts which exceed a person's available resources (Lazarus, 1984). Efficacy involves an individual's beliefs about whether or not he or she can successfully perform specific behaviors that will produce certain outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

Stress relates to Tinto's definition of incongruence in that both constructs involve interactions with one's environment as well as perceptions as to the character of those interactions. A student, for instance, may encounter a social situation with which he or she feels powerless to deal effectively. Repeated stressful encounters, especially when they involve factors beyond the student's control, such as institutional bias against a student's ethnic or cultural background, can increase the feeling of incongruence and prevent social integration.

Isolation, the other root of lack of integration which Tinto described, relates to the concept of efficacy, the common link being a failure to take action. In other words, even though a certain action would be expected to bring about a desirable consequence, one will not even attempt it if he or she does not believe it can be successfully performed. Consequently, if a student does not believe he

or she can successfully perform the behaviors necessary to become socially integrated, the student will tend to become isolated rather than attempt those behaviors.

Taken together, social stress and social efficacy can be considered important barriers to social integration within the college environment. In addition, they closely parallel Tinto's model because of the correlation between the concepts of social stress and incongruence, and the concepts of social efficacy and isolation.

Purpose of the Study

Tinto's theory has provided a base for much research into the problem of college adjustment and persistence. Many tests of his model have been done and modifications proposed. While the link between social integration and persistence has been established (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979), no studies have sought to investigate the roles that perceived availability of family support, cultural identity, and visits home play in facilitating social integration. Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) found that ethnicity can play an important part in the integration process. Nora and Rendon (1990) also included ethnicity as a variable in their research, but did not look specifically at level of cultural identity.

Therefore, this study used Tinto's theory of college persistence as a model for focusing on predictors of social integration. Three predictor variables were selected:

family support, cultural identity, and frequency of visits home. Two barriers to social integration were assessed by using measures of social stress and social efficacy.

Three hypotheses provided the basis for the investigation. It was theorized that higher levels of perceived availability of family support would predict lower levels of social stress and higher levels of social efficacy. Second, that higher levels of cultural identity (stronger identification with the majority culture) would predict lower levels of social stress and higher levels of social efficacy. Finally, it was predicted that higher frequency of visits home would predict higher levels of social stress and lower levels of social efficacy.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

Participants in the study were second and third year students enrolled in a large west coast university. As part of a larger study, 311 survey questionnaires were mailed to students involved with the university's Chicano Education Opportunity Program. The initial mailing and one follow-up mailing resulted in one hundred sixty-four useable questionnaires, a response rate of 52.7%. The respondents were all Hispanic, identifying their family's ethnic origin as Mexican , Latin American, or Caribbean. The subject pool consisted of 43 (26%) males, 121 (74%) females. The students were fairly evenly divided between two classes, with 87 (53%) sophomores, and 77 (47%) juniors.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire, in addition to general demographic data, contained sets of questions to assess family support, cultural identity, frequency of visits home, stress, and college efficacy.

Family Support

Family support was measured using ten questions (see Appendix A) from the Social Provisions Scale (SPS; Russell &

Cutrona, 1984). The questions chosen were those which loaded highest on the first unrotated factor from a factor analysis conducted with the same population a year earlier (Solberg et al., 1991). The questions were designed to assess perceived support from one's family based on the subject's current relationships with family members. For example: "There is a family member I could talk to about important decisions in my life." Each sentence was rated from one (Strongly Disagree) to five (Strongly Agree).

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity was measured using five questions (see Appendix B) relating to language preference and three questions relating to peer ethnicity, which were adapted from the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (Cuellar, Harris & Jasso, 1980). For example: "What language do you prefer?" "What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had from ages 6 to 18?" Each item was rated on a five point scale; all eight items were summed together as a general measure of cultural identity.

Frequency of Visits Home

Frequency of visits home was used as a general measure of the degree of separation from family. Respondents were simply asked the average number of times they visited home during a quarter, using a seven point scale with the following choices: "0, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10+."

Social Integration

Social integration implies the degree to which students perceived themselves to be incorporated into the mainstream of college social life. Integration could also be termed "fit" for in essence, it represents the degree to which a student "fits in" with the social culture and activities of the college community. Two measures of barriers to social integration were used in this study, one measuring the stress actually experienced by students in a social context, the other measuring the students' own level of confidence in their being able to successfully operate necessary social skills.

Social Stress. Stress items taken from the College Multicultural Stress Scale (Solberg, Falk, Valdez, and Villareal, 1991) were used. The original pool of items was subjected to a factor analysis which resulted in three principal factors being named: Stress Efficacy, Academic Stress, and Social Stress. For the purposes of the current study, only the ten items comprising the Social Stress portion of the scale were used (see Appendix C). The Social Stress factor taps a student's "connectedness to the academic community and includes issues related to living in the community, class participation, finding support groups, and peer and faculty relationships" (p. 27).

Social Efficacy. Social efficacy was assessed using the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI; Solberg, O'Brien,

Villareal, Kennel, and Davis, 1991). This inventory consists of a series of 20 questions concerning numerous experiences related to college life. Of the items on the inventory, eight were used which a principal components analysis revealed to relate to social efficacy (see Appendix D). Respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in being able to successfully complete a variety of tasks commonly required of students, using a ten point scale ranging from zero (Not At All Confident) to ten (Extremely Confident).

The College Self-Efficacy Inventory was developed around issues that are not necessarily culture specific, but which confront all college students. A six member panel independently rated each of 40 items from an original pool of items relating to confidence in one's ability to engage in activities essential in student life. Twenty items received a high consensus among the raters and were thus chosen for the CSEI.

A principal components analysis was performed on the chosen items which resulted in a three factor solution, the main factors being named Course Efficacy, Roommate Efficacy, and Social Efficacy. All three factors were found to have good convergent and discriminant validity and strong internal consistency. For the present study, only the Social Efficacy factor, consisting of eight items addressing

different facets of interpersonal and social adjustment to college, was used.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Prior to assessing whether family support, cultural identity, and visits home were related to social stress and social efficacy, a 2 (gender) x 2 (class level) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to assess for possible gender or class differences for all predictor and criterion variables, respectively (see Table 1). No interaction effects or main effects were found.

Table 1

2 X 2 Multivariate and Univariate Analysis of Variance for
all Variables by Gender and Class

Source	<u>Univariate Tests</u>		<u>Multivariate Tests</u>	
	SS	F	Wilks Lamda	F
<u>Gender</u>			0.970	0.482
Visits				
Home	0.005	0.003		
Family				
Support	0.338	1.079		
Cultural				
I.D.	0.084	0.142		
Stress	0.078	0.163		
Efficacy	6.680	2.166		
<u>Class</u>			0.963	0.338
Visits				
Home	0.827	0.475		
Family				
Support	0.212	0.412		
Cultural				
I.D.	0.004	0.937		
Stress	0.107	0.637		
Efficacy	11.546	0.055		
<u>Gender X Class</u>			0.988	0.868
Visits				
Home	1.209	0.389		
Family				
Support	0.062	0.656		
Cultural				
I.D.	0.450	0.358		
Stress	0.039	0.776		
Efficacy	0.049	0.900		

Note: df=150

Mean square error: Visits=1.617, Support=.313,
Cultural I.D.=.588, Stress=.477, Efficacy=3.082

Means and Standard Deviations

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the independent variables (visits home, cultural identity, and family support), and dependent variables (social stress and social efficacy). Perceived availability of family support was high with a mean of 4.38, and a mode of 5.0, suggesting that range restriction may be a problem in subsequent analyses. The dependent variables, social stress and social efficacy, exhibited a relatively normal distribution around their respective means.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for all Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Potential Range	Obtained Range
Visits Home	2.17	1.26	1.00-7.00	1.00-6.00
Family Support	4.38	0.55	1.00-5.00	2.70-5.00
Cultural I.D.	3.90	0.75	1.00-5.00	1.75-5.00
Stress	2.29	0.70	1.00-5.00	1.00-4.63
Efficacy	5.85	1.76	1.00-10.00	0.57-8.14

Zero-Order Correlations for all Variables

A zero-order correlation matrix using predictor and criterion variables, as well as gender and class, is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for all Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Visits Home	--	-.2375**	-.0432	.0648	-.1229
2. Cultural Identity		.88	.1499	-.3200**	.0800
3. Family Support			.88	-.2558**	.2150**
4. Stress				.83	-.4966**
5. Efficacy					.88

Note: Cronbach's alphas are shown on diagonal

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Social stress correlated negatively with cultural identity indicating that students reported lower levels of stress if they reported stronger identity with the majority culture of the institution. Social stress was also negatively related to family support. Students indicated lower levels of stress if they perceived a higher level of social support from their family. No significant relationship surfaced between social stress and number of visits home.

Social efficacy was significantly correlated with only one predictor, family support. Students indicating higher levels of perceived family support indicated higher levels of social efficacy. Neither cultural identity nor number of visits home showed any significant relationship with social efficacy. Cultural identity and number of visits home showed a negative relationship. Students who identified more strongly with their culture of origin also tended to visit home more frequently.

Finally, the social stress and social efficacy scores were negatively correlated. Students who reported high levels of social stress also reported low levels of social efficacy.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Because the purpose of the study was to identify significant predictors from a pool of variables, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted for each of the two

dependent variables. In each case the predictor variables were family support, cultural identity, and number of visits home.

Table 4 presents the results of the stepwise regression for social stress. Cultural identity and family support together accounted for 14% of the variance in social stress, with cultural identity accounting for 10% ($F=17.36$, $p < .0001$) of the total variance, family support accounting for an additional 4% ($F=7.71$, $p < .0062$) of variance. Number of visits home failed to contribute a significant amount of unique variance. Participants indicating higher levels of cultural identification with the majority culture and higher levels of perceived availability of family support indicated lower levels of social stress.

Table 4

Summary of Stepwise Regression for Social Stress Scale

Variable	R^2	R^2 Chg.	Beta	F	p>
Cultural I.D.	.10	.10	-.3164	17.36	.0001
Family Support	.14	.04	-.2088	7.71	.0062
Visits Home	.14	.00	-.0127	0.03	.8684

As can be seen in Table 5, with respect to predicting social efficacy, only family support was significant, accounting for 4% ($F=7.26$, $p < .0078$) of the total variance. Neither cultural identity nor number of visits home accounted for any unique variance of their own. Therefore, students reporting higher levels of perceived availability of family support also indicated higher levels of confidence for dealing with social interactions.

Table 5

Summary of Stepwise Regression for Social Efficacy Scale

Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	Beta	F	p>
Family Support	.04	.04	.2110	7.26	.0078
Visits Home	.00	.00	-.1140	2.13	.1463
Cultural I.D.	.00	.00	.0490	0.38	.5372

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Of the three hypotheses proposed, two were supported; one was not. The hypothesis that higher levels of perceived availability of family support would predict lower social stress and higher social efficacy was supported. The hypothesis that stronger identification with the majority culture would predict lower social stress and higher social efficacy was partly supported. A third hypothesis, that a higher number of visits home would predict higher social stress and lower social efficacy, was not supported.

A stepwise multiple regression using perceived availability of family support, cultural identity, and frequency of visits home as predictor variables, and social stress as the criterion variable revealed that family support and cultural identity together accounted for 14% of the total variance. Cultural identity alone accounted for 10% of the total variance, while family support accounted for 4%. Frequency of visits home did not account for a significant portion of the variance.

A second stepwise multiple regression was performed using the same predictor variables but with social efficacy

as the criterion variable. This analysis revealed that 4% of the total variance was accounted for by family support, and that no significant amount of variance was accounted for by either cultural identity or frequency of visits home.

A high level of perceived available family support appears to mediate stress arising from social interactions. The fact that social stress was not predicted by visits home seems to indicate that what is most important is not necessarily face-to-face support from the family, but rather a perception that family support is available. Just knowing that supportive family members are there if and when they are needed appears to be enough to lessen perceived stress in social interactions. Likewise with social efficacy, the underlying awareness of the availability of family support seems to be enough to bolster confidence regarding social interactions.

Cultural identity strongly predicted students' reports of social stress. This concurs with Munoz' (1985) assertion that the process of integrating into the new college community is especially stressful for the Hispanic student. This conclusion suggests the idea that students who identify closely with their Hispanic roots experience heightened stress in attempting to fit in with the anglo culture predominant in most U.S. academic institutions.

The fact that frequency of visits home did not account for significant amounts of variance in either the social

stress or social efficacy measures may be due in large part to the wide scope of the variable. There may be numerous reasons for visiting home (work, illness in the family, close proximity to campus, etc.) which were not addressed in this study.

A zero-order correlation matrix showed frequency of visits home to be negatively correlated with cultural identity. The less strongly a student identified with the mainstream culture, the more frequently he or she visited home. The higher number of visits could be due to a number of reasons, but it should be noted that even though these students had more contact with their families, they did not report higher levels of family support. In other words, for students who identified less strongly with the majority culture, visiting home, rather than increasing family support, may have provided relief from the stressful encounters of campus life by taking advantage of the family support they knew to be available.

The two measures of social integration, social stress and social efficacy, were negatively correlated with each other, indicating that students who reported higher levels of stress tended to report lower levels of social efficacy. This was not surprising in light of Tinto's theory which states that the roots of lack of integration, incongruence and isolation, may influence each other. A student who experiences incongruence with his environment due to

stressful social interactions may tend to become isolated, and conversely, an isolated student who lacks confidence in social situations may tend to find any social interaction stressful, and thus experience feelings of incongruence with other members of the university.

The apparent stability of the family demonstrated in this study is striking. The findings suggest that the strong family support commonly associated with Hispanic families does not appear to fade and, indeed, may even increase as identification with the majority culture increases. These results also support Rueschenberg and Buriel's (1989) findings that a family's internal cultural characteristics remain fairly stable over time as the family adapts to the majority culture.

With evidence to show that perceived availability of family support and cultural identity are related to social integration in a Hispanic population, universities should direct efforts toward increasing the positive effects of available family support, and toward lowering the barriers that confront students who identify more strongly with their culture of origin. Orientation programs should be developed which involve the entire family and specifically encourage family support during the student's progression from life at home to life at college. In addition, social enclaves should be encouraged, which would provide a smaller ethnic community within the larger range of the university. These

enclaves could provide a base of support which would allow the student to gradually integrate into the larger social milieu of the university.

One limitation of this study was that the sample population was taken from one region of the country, and all the participants were involved with the university's Chicano Education Opportunity Program, which may have caused a certain type of student to be preselected. Also, the predictor "frequency of visits home" may have encompassed too broad a definition to account for a significant amount of variance. It should also be noted that the mean score for perceived availability of family support was 4.38 out of a possible 5.0 total, resulting in the possibility of range restriction. Finally, the study utilized students in their second and third years of college, thereby missing those who may have dropped out during their first year because of lack of social integration.

Future research is needed that would extend this work to other populations in other sections of the country, and to different ethnic cultures within the Hispanic community. Other studies should add a recognized measure of college adjustment (e.g., Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire) in order to provide a comparison between adjustment and social integration.

A study similar to the present one needs to be done which would be administered to a freshman class during the

first semester and then again a year later in order to determine which students had dropped out during the course of the year. This would gather data from students at the beginning of the integration process and would test Tinto's theory that many students who fail to integrate drop out early in their college career. Finally, only a portion of the variance in social integration was accounted for by this study. Future inquiries are warranted which would explore other predictors of social integration, as well as predictors of academic integration, the other component of integration which was not covered here.

APPENDIX A

Family Support Assessment

For the following questions, please think about your current relationships with family members. With these relationships in mind, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

1. I have close relationships in my family that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well being.
2. There is a family member I could talk to about important decisions in my life.
3. Members of my family recognize my competence and skill.
4. There is no one in my family who shares my interests and concerns.
5. There is a trustworthy family member to whom I could turn for advice if I were having problems.
6. I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other member of my family.
7. There is no one in my family I can depend on for aid if I really need it.
8. There is no one in my family with whom I feel comfortable.
9. There are family members who admire my talents and abilities.
10. There are family members I can count on in an emergency.

APPENDIX B

Cultural Identity Assessment

Please complete these questions using the following responses:

- 1= Spanish only
- 2= Mostly Spanish, some English
- 3= Spanish and English about equally
- 4= Mostly English, some Spanish
- 5= English only

1. What language do you speak?
 2. What language do you prefer?
 3. In what language do you think?
 4. What music do you prefer?
-

What languages do you read?

1. Only Spanish
 2. Spanish better than English
 3. Both Spanish and English equally well
 4. English better than spanish
 5. Only English
-

Please complete these questions using the following responses:

- 1= Almost exclusively Mexicans, Chicanos, Mexican Americans (La Raza)
- 2= Mostly Mexicans, Chicanos, Mexican Americans
- 3= About equally La Raza (Mexicans, Chicanos, or Mexican Americans)
- 4= Mostly Anglos, Blacks, or other ethnic groups
- 5= Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, or other ethnic groups

1. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had as a child up to age 6?
2. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had from ages 6 to 18 (or present age)?
3. With whom do you now associate in the community?

APPENDIX C

Social Stress Assessment

In the last month how often have you experienced the following:

1. Difficulty trying to fulfill responsibilities at home and at school.
2. Difficulty trying to meet peers of your race/ethnicity on campus.
3. Difficulty finding support groups sensitive to your needs.
4. A fear of failing to meet family expectations.
5. Difficulty participating in class.
6. Difficulty living in the local community.
7. Difficulty handling relationships.
8. Difficulty with peers treating you unlike the way they treat each other.
9. Difficulty from faculty on the basis of your ethnicity.
10. Difficulty from peers on the basis of your ethnicity.

APPENDIX D

Social Efficacy Assessment

How confident are you that you could successfully complete the following tasks:

1. Make new friends at college.
2. Talk to your professors.
3. Join an intramural sports team.
4. Get a date when you want one.
5. Ask a professor a question outside of class.
6. Talk to university staff.
7. Join a student organization.
8. Participate in class discussions.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 20, 1992
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