Students of Color and the College Experience  
An Annotated Bibliography

African American Students


Comparing data from a national sample of freshmen African American students at predominately white colleges and universities (PWCU) to those at historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), Allen analyzed black students’ academic and social achievement and their occupational goals at these two types of institution. His findings reveal that black students at HBCU tend to have higher academic achievements, higher levels of social involvement, and more favorable relationships with their professors. Psychologically, that cohort of students also fared better than their African American peers at PWCU; they reported having positive self-images, strong racial pride, and high aspirations. Allen also noted that black students at PWCU did not perform as well academically as their black peers at HBCU, despite the fact that they tended to come from families of higher socioeconomic status and have better academic backgrounds, in that they attended higher quality high schools.


In studying a sample of Black, Mexican-American, and White first year students attending a predominantly White southern University, Arbona and Novy found that White students’ persistence was predicted by noncognitive variables—nonacademic personal characteristics—(for example leadership qualities as measured by experience in leadership positions) while their academic success was predicted by academic variables (SAT scores). However, the same was not true for Black students, for whom noncognitive variables did not predict academic success or persistence. Noncognitive dimensions were not correlated with Mexican American students' persistence either. Their first year GPAs were predicted by their SAT math scores and how determined they were to obtain a college degree.


Using data from the National Study on Student Learning, the researchers compared how perceptions of discrimination affected 1,139 White first year students’ and 315 African American students’ college experience. For African American students, perceptions of discrimination negatively affected their social experience and caused them to feel less committed to their college or university. Their decision to persist, however, was not affected by these
perceptions but by the support their parents gave them. Parental encouragement was also important to White students. It had a significant affect on their social experiences, goal commitment, institutional commitment, and also influenced their persistence. The finding that parental encouragement positively affected these students’ first year experience challenges Tinto’s (see Tinto, Vincent, “Stages of Student Departure...” below) theory that it is necessary for students to separate from their old community (high school friends and family) in order to successfully become a member in their new college community.


Examining over 2,400 students (1,825 of whom were White, 328 African-American, and 340 Chicano) who attended predominantly white institutions from 1985 to 1989, Hurtado observed differences in perceptions of racial tension among institution-types. For instance, students at private, four-year colleges perceived a better campus race climate than did students at public colleges and universities. Students who attended institutions they perceived as having “high student-centered priorities,” those that treat student aid and services as high priorities, tended to report lower levels of racial tension on campus. Chicano students were least likely to feel as if the institutions they attended had high student-centered priorities. Black students tended to perceive higher levels of racial tension on their campuses.


In an effort to further comprehend the subgroup differences of students of color, 302 graduate and undergraduate students from five colleges and universities in Texas and California completed the Family of Origin Scale (FOS). Previous cross-cultural research suggests that comparing students of color with Anglo American culture establishes Anglo American culture as the norm “against which all other groups should be measured.” By comparing the students of color to one another, this assumption may be extinguished; however, the subgroup differences of each group make a multicultural understanding “compelling and complex.” The FOS, measuring the “perceived levels of family health, particularly as it relates to the constructs of family autonomy and intimacy,” was administered to 84 African Americans, 65 Asian Americans, and 153 Hispanic Americans. The variance on the scales of autonomy and intimacy within the three racial groups suggested that a multicultural understanding requires both the identification of predominate cultural characteristics and of crucial subgroup differences.


In comparing the experiences of 84 white students to a group of 124 Asian American, Latino, African and American first year students at the same college at two points in time—when they first arrive and at the beginning of the second semester—Kenny and Stryker found that white
students reported larger social networks than either Asian or African American students. The support white students receive from their peers positively influenced their adjustment to college and their commitment to the college. The support students of color receive from their family positively affected their social and personal adjustment to college.


While previous research suggests that minority students experience a greater sense of alienation on predominately White campuses, these minority-status stresses promote the students’ formation of in-group friendships through joining ethnic organizations and spending time with peers of the same ethnic background. Although in-group friendships serve as a great support source for minority students, these friendships may emphasize the students’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination. In this four-year longitudinal study of White, Asian, Latino, and African American students at a large multiethnic university, the role of in-group friendships on students’ perception of discrimination and social and academic adjustment is explored. Data collection began with a survey administered at summer orientation, and the rest of the research was conducted through telephone interviews. The pre-college sample consisted of 748 Whites, 753 Asian Americans, 68 African Americans, and 255 Latinos. At the end of senior year, the sample consisted of 311 Whites, 389 Asian Americans, 67 African Americans, and 252 Latinos. Measures of in-group friendships and perceptions of ethnic discrimination were collected at the following times: pre-college, at the end of freshman year, at the end of sophomore year and junior year, and the end of senior year. The surveys also measured the students’ sense of belonging on campus, their academic commitment, and their academic success. The results demonstrated that Latino students with more in-group friendships “exhibited reduced belonging and academic performance” by their senior year. African American students who possessed more in-group friendships experienced “enhanced academic commitment and motivation” by their senior year.


Malaney and Shively examined the expectations and experiences of first year White, Black, Asian American, and Latino students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. They conducted telephone interviews of 377 students in their first semester and 407 in the spring semester. Their questions focused on students’ expectations before they arrived on campus and their later experiences as well as issues of racial harassment on campus. African American students had experienced more racial harassment than other groups and were significantly less likely than other students to feel that the University made adequate efforts to make them feel comfortable (and they became less likely to say so in the spring). African American students like Asian American students, held low expectations of receiving a degree. African Americans also expected to achieve a lower GPA than the White or Latino students and in the fall obtained a lower GPA than the White or Asian students. Latino students held the highest expected GPA of the four groups. Latino students' participation in extracurricular activities decreased from the fall to spring semester, whereas Black students’ participation increased. The percentage of Latino
students who felt that they "definitely" made the right decision in attending the University dropped sharply in the second semester (a 30.6% decrease), while the percentages in other groups remained the same over the course of the year or increased. Asian Americans held low expectations for receiving a degree and lower expected GPA than White students and were also less likely than White or Latino students to feel part of the University community. Asian American students were significantly less likely than African Americans to have experienced racial discrimination and harassment.


By conducting a survey of 831 first year students, 10.7% of which were African American, 21.5% Asian American, 17% Hispanic, and 50.4% White, who attended a predominantly White Midwestern university, the authors studied how students’ perceptions of a hostile racial climate affected their academic/social experiences, academic/intellectual development, academic performance (GPA), goal/ institutional commitment, and persistence. Discrimination and parental encouragement significantly affected the academic experiences of students of color. Students’ goal commitment was affected most by the level of parental support they received. The institutional commitment of students of color was most influenced by their academic experiences with faculty and staff, while for White students parental encouragement was most influential. Students’ persistence was significantly, directly affected by their cumulative GPA (for students of color and White students). When direct and indirect effects are added together, the largest total effect on persistence of White students was goal commitment. The largest total effect on the persistence of students of color was parental encouragement.


Using CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) Survey results from 1971 and a follow-up survey in 1980, Pascarella et al. compared the self-concept—self-perception constructed through interactions with others and their environment—of 4,597 black and white students when they entered four-year institutions to their self-concept nine years later in 1980. They found that students’ self-concept in 1971 had the greatest influence on their self-concept in 1980, more so than the variables of students’ background and the characteristics of the institution they attended. Students’ levels of reported social and academic competency on entering college significantly affected their social and academic integration in college. The researchers observed some differences in certain variables’ effect on self-concept along racial and gender lines. For instance, collegiate social leadership and involvement had the second greatest effect on black men’s 1980 self-concept, while for white men and women of both races, the influence of this variable, though present, was not so marked. Another example of differences along racial and gender lines is the importance of academic integration. For black women, this was more effectual on their social and academic self-concept in 1980 than it was for other students.

Using focus groups Terenzini examined 132 students from four institutions, two of which were predominantly white (one was a small, liberal arts college and the other was a large research university), another that was a predominantly black state university, and a fourth community college that had one-third Hispanic students, 18 percent African-Americans and three percent Native Americans. The focus groups revealed that first generation students—those who were the first in their family to attend college—found the transition to college, especially the academic transition, more difficult than traditional students—those who were not the first in their family to go to college. Perhaps anticipating the difficulty they would have with transitioning academically, many first generation students decided to initially forego participation in extracurricular activities in order to devote their energy and time to academics. These students anticipated participating in extracurricular activities later on once they felt more comfortable academically. Terenzini observed a difference among students in the importance of validating experiences, those experiences inside and outside of class with peers, faculty, and staff that make students feel as if they belong at the institution and their presence is beneficial to the institution. For students at the predominantly white schools, their acceptance to the institution was academically validating in and of itself, while students at the other school often sought further academic validating experiences. Students at the predominantly white universities more often looked for social validation than students from the other types of institutions.


The purpose of this study was to decipher the various coping strategies of different racial groups. At a large Eastern university, 2,661 first-year students (77% White American, 13% Asian American, and 10% African American) were surveyed online during summer orientation. The survey examined the students’ attitudes towards help-seeking in both academic and personal realms (e.g. study skills, time management training, counseling for drugs/alcohol, career plans, and personal concerns). The results suggested that African American students were the most likely “to utilize time management training and career counseling;” furthermore, African American students were the most likely to possess positive attitudes towards help-seeking, followed by Asian Americans and Whites. Females in all three racial groups were more likely than males to use the help-seeking resources available. Asian Americans were the most likely to use avoidance as a coping strategy.


Tracey and Sedlacek tested the predictive ability of the NCQ, or Noncognitive Questionnaire, an instrument they designed to measure a number of variables (nonacademic personal characteristics; for example leadership qualities) they believe affect students’ academic success. They sampled two cohorts of students: one in 1979 (1,752 White students and 243 Black
students) and the other in 1980 (571 White students and 176 Black students). These students completed the NCQ during orientation. The authors then followed the students over their four years and examined their cumulative GPA and enrollment status throughout their eight semesters. They concluded that students' pre-college perceptions might predict their later academic success. For both Black and White students two dimensions of the NCQ were predictive of grades during all four years: positive self-concept and realistic self-appraisal. For Black students, persistence correlated to their academic self-confidence, realistic self-appraisal of academic skills, and their academic familiarity. Having the support for their college plans and a preference for long-term goals during their first three semesters predicted Black students’ persistence as well. SAT scores were not predictive of persistence for either Black or White students; white students' persistence was not predicted by NCQ variables either.
Asian American Students


In his study of Asian American college students, Alvin N. Alvarez explores the role of race and racial identity in the students’ lives. With the hope of encouraging colleges to acknowledge the practical applications of racial identity theory, Alvarez applies the six statuses of identity—conformity, dissonance, immersion, emersion, internalization, and integrative awareness—to Asian American college students. Alvarez argues that an understanding of the progression from conformity to integrative awareness can help “students cope with the frustration associated with a seemingly intractable issue” by demonstrating the possibility of change and the process of change. Furthermore, the knowledge of racial identity development can underline the heterogeneity of the Asian American community, for different groups of Asian American students possess different responses towards racial issues.


Through assessing Asian American college students’ perception of campus climate, this study aimed to discover the effects of campus climate on student development, specifically its effect on Asian American students’ “mental health and individual levels of depression.” This longitudinal study surveyed Asian American college students and other college students upon just entering college (1993) and upon exiting college (1997). The surveys assessed the depression of the students and their perception of the campus climate. The independent variables in the campus climate survey included: personal background characteristics; institutional characteristics; faculty perceptions of the institution; current academic major; college involvement and experiences; and perceptions of campus climate. The results demonstrated that Asian American students are at the greatest risk of feeling depressed and perceiving negative campus climates. Furthermore, the students’ perception of campus climate proved to be an accurate “predictor of depression” among college students.


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The adaptation experiences of 1.5-Generation Asian American college students, Asian Americans who were born in their homeland but who grew up in the U.S., were the primary focus of this study. Through consensual qualitative interviews, the subjects’ memories of immigration experiences and their current experiences in the U.S. were discussed. At a large mid-Atlantic university, 10 (7 male and 3 female) Asian American students who immigrated between the ages of 4 and 9 were interviewed. In order to gain a broader understanding of the adaptation experiences of Asian Americans, Korean, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, and Thai students were included in the study. The interviews covered the following topics: “(a) emigration and immigration experiences, (b) adjustment experiences immediately after immigration, (c) family experiences, (d) cultural and social support, (e) Asian versus U.S. culture, (f) acculturation, (g) cultural identity, (h) ethnic identity, (i) biculturalism and bicultural competence, and (j) psychological support.” All of the data was collected via email. The participants’ responses indicated 4 “domains of adaptation:” preimmigration experiences, acculturation and enculturation experiences, intercultural relationships, and support systems. The ability to fluently speak English proved extremely important in the subjects’ initial adjustment. The subjects also identified with both Asian and American cultural values.


While prior research suggests that an adherence to both Asian and European American cultural values among Asian Americans contributes to increased mental health, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between an adherence to Asian and European American cultural
values and mental health-related variables (e.g. collective self-esteem and acculturative stress) in Asian American college students. The study also aimed to assess the relationship between Asian American students’ adherence to Asian and European cultural values and effectively coping with cultural differences. 156 (60 men, 96 women) Asian American college students at a West Coast university completed a questionnaire including the Asian Values Scale, European American Values Scale for Asian Americans—Revised, Collective Self-Esteem Scale, Situational, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale—Short Form, Cognitive Flexibility Scale, and General Self-Efficacy subscale of the Self-Efficacy Scale. The results yielded some support for the proposed relation between the mental health of the students and their adherence to Asian and European American cultural values; however, no relation between mental health-related variables and “factors related to successfully coping with cultural differences” was found.


In this study, Kim and Omizo sought to understand how the enculturation and acculturation of Asian American college students related to specific psychological factors: “cognitive flexibility, general self-efficacy, collective self-esteem, acculturative stress, and attitudes towards help seeking.” Under the hypothesis that a well-integrated student’s adaptation would involve less stress, Kim and Omizo distributed a questionnaire containing various instruments (e.g. Asian American Multidimensional Acculturation Sale, Cognitive Flexibility Scale, General Self-Efficacy subscale of the Self-Efficacy Scale, etc.) to male (n=60) and female (n=96) students with a variety of various Asian ethnicities at a West Coast university. The results suggested a relationship between collective self-esteem, acculturation, and enculturation; those students who successfully participated in Asian and European cultural behavior possessed higher self-esteem. Additionally, the Asian American students’ success relates more closely to their adherence to Asian American norms as opposed to conformation to European American norms. These results propose some relation between acculturation, enculturation and mental health in Asian American students; however, other data suggested that a bilinear model should be used when analyzing acculturation and enculturation.


E. W. Kuo aims to investigate the processes of identity development, including both individual and group identity development, of Asian Americans. Other research suggests a “cultural gap” exists between the first-generation and second-generation Asian Americans, thus the college experience may serve as a significant clarifying factor in the second-generation’s identity development. The study hoped to answer the following two questions: (a) “How do second generation Asian American college students interpret their evolving sense of self in relation to race/ethnicity?” (b) “How does second generation Asian American students’ racial/ethnic identity affect their college experience?” Four second-generation Asian-American participants, recommended to Kuo by other students not involved in the research, at UCLA were interviewed
for 60-90 minutes. The participants described a “struggle to find balance between their inner and social selves.” The participants’ peers already had a predetermined idea of the Asian group identity, which made the participants’ own definitions of identity more difficult to establish. Connecting with other Asian American students became a valuable, comforting part of the participants’ construction of identity.


While some research suggests that students of color who attended a culturally diverse high school experience less difficulty when adjusting to a college environment, other research asserts that cultural orientation is also a vital component of a smooth transition to college. In this study, Lee and Davis sought to discover the extent to which these two factors influence the Asian American students’ sense of belongingness. At a large Southwestern university, one hundred and four students (38% Asian American; 62% White) completed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, Campus Connectedness Scale, Multicultural Experiences Inventory, and a demographic survey. The results suggested that the Asian Americans’ ethnic identity and other group orientation “were significantly correlated with campus connectedness.” No correlation between ethnic identity and campus connectedness existed in the White students’ responses.


In an effort to assess coping with intergenerational family conflict among Asian American College students, Richard M. Lee, Jenny Su, and Emiko Yoshida focused on the coping strategies of problem solving and social support seeking and their effectiveness in assuaging family conflict. At the University of Minnesota, a total of 117 Asian American college students (52 men, 65 women) completed a survey packet questioning the students’ demographics, levels of intergenerational family conflict, coping strategies, and emotional and physical functioning. The students generally reported a “moderate amount” of family conflict, and the two coping strategies of problem solving and social support seeking were found to “differentially moderate” the conflict. When family conflict levels were considered low, problem solving was more useful; whereas, social support seeking was more effective with high family conflict levels. Furthermore, the results suggested that family conflict was related to “other aspects of family functioning.” Limitations of this study include the reliance on only self-reported assessment of family conflict, the failure to test the effectiveness of other coping strategies and the combination of various strategies, and the small sample size.


The principal aim of this study was to examine the structure and measurements of the Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and its effectiveness as an indicator of ethnic identity in a specific
ethnic group. Three datasets of Asian American undergraduate college students (n=323) from large, public universities in California and Texas filled out questionnaires including demographic information, the MEIM, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), and the Social Connectedness Scale-Campus Version (SCS). A three-factor substructure of the MEIM was discovered, and these three factors of ethnic identity were labeled EI-Clarity, EI-Pride, and EI-Engage. From these three factors, scales were created that “demonstrated acceptable reliability and construct validity.” Ethnic identity clarity and ethnic identity pride were factors related to a “psychological well-being;” whereas, ethnic identity engagement had no such psychological effect.


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also expected to achieve a lower GPA than the White or Latino students and in the fall obtained a lower GPA than the White or Asian students. Latino students held the highest expected GPA of the four groups. Latino students' participation in extracurricular activities decreased from the fall to spring semester, whereas Black students’ participation increased. The percentage of Latino students who felt that they "definitely" made the right decision in attending the University dropped sharply in the second semester (a 30.6% decrease), while the percentages in other groups remained the same over the course of the year or increased. Asian Americans held low expectations for receiving a degree and lower expected GPA than White students and were also less likely than White or Latino students to feel part of the University community. Asian American students were significantly less likely than African Americans to have experienced racial discrimination and harassment.


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The purpose of this study was to decipher the various coping strategies of different racial groups. At a large Eastern university, 2,661 first-year students (77% White American, 13% Asian American, and 10% African American) were surveyed online during summer orientation. The survey examined the students’ attitudes towards help-seeking in both academic and personal realms (e.g. study skills, time management training, counseling for drugs/alcohol, career plans, and personal concerns). The results suggested that African American students were the most likely “to utilize time management training and career counseling;” furthermore, African American students were the most likely to possess positive attitudes towards help-seeking, followed by Asian Americans and Whites. Females in all three racial groups were more likely than males to use the help-seeking resources available. Asian Americans were the most likely to use avoidance as a coping strategy.

This study assessed the types of support that Asian-American college students seek when they are faced with difficulties presented in a university setting. The study was performed at a large Midwestern university. Using a survey that focused the relationship between acculturation and help-seeking, Solberg, Choi, Ritsma, and Jolly found that both male (n=322) and female (n=274) Asian-American students most frequently used family and non-student friends as support sources. Those students possessing low identification with the majority group had no apparent problem seeking help; furthermore, they “indicated preferences for seeking help from a variety of sources within the university” (e.g. church groups, student organizations, clubs affiliated with the ethnic group).


Because Asian Americans are stereotyped as high-achieving students with a supposed guarantee of educational success, their educational needs have frequently been overlooked. Ling Yeh addresses the relationship between the increasing attrition rates and educational risk of Asian American college students. Using Johnson’s definition of educational risk—“when [students] find themselves in environments for which they are ill-equipped”—as a framework for her own discussion, Yeh classifies risk factors into four groups: individual risk factors, including language, education, and immigration status; family risk factors, including socioeconomic status, parents’ education, and family support and guidance; institutional risk factors, including inadequate academic preparation, institutional climate, and inadequate institutional support programs; and community and societal factors, including model minority stereotype and intragroup socioeconomic gap. Yeh concludes that Asian American students at educational risk can best be helped through recruitment, retention, and research.


The primary aims of this study were to gain a greater understanding of the influences, experiences, and other factors that contribute to Asian-American ethnic identification; to uncover any patterns in this process of identity development; and to decipher the relationship between “the collectivistic nature of Asian cultures to the process of Asian-American ethnic identification.” At a prestigious California university, 78 undergraduate students (41 male; 46 female; mean age of 19.3), all possessing a self-identified Asian heritage, participated in the study. In order to address the purposes of the study, Christine J. Yeh and Karen Huang developed the Ethnic Identity Development Exercise, which includes two sections: a demographic survey and a written or drawn representation of their own ethnic identity development. The results demonstrated that the development of ethnic identity is a complex, nonlinear process that emphasizes collectivism. External forces most significantly influence the
students’ sense of self, and shame serves as a “motivating force in ethnic identity and development.”
First Generation Students


Pascarella et al. compared college experiences of first generation students—those whose mother and father had no more than a high school education—to the experiences of their peers. Examining data collected over three years as part of the National Study of Student Learning, they found that first generation students worked significantly more hours per week than their peers, were less likely to live on campus, and had less credit hours. The authors draw a connection between these tendencies and the lower levels of extracurricular involvement and social interaction with peers of first generation students. Despite the fact that first generation students participated less in extracurricular activities, the time they did spend in such pursuits benefited them more than their peers. However other activities like volunteer work, employment, and participation in intercollegiate sports, tended to have a more negative impact on first generation students than it did on other students.


Using focus groups Terenzini examined 132 students from four institutions, two of which were predominantly white (one was a small, liberal arts college and the other was a large research university), another that was a predominantly black state university, and a fourth community college that had one-third Hispanic students, 18 percent African-Americans and three percent Native Americans. The focus groups revealed that first generation students—those who were the first in their family to attend college—found the transition to college, especially the academic transition, more difficult than traditional students—those who were not the first in their family to go to college. Perhaps anticipating the difficulty they would have with transitioning academically, many first generation students decided to initially forego participation in extracurricular activities in order to devote their energy and time to academics. These students anticipated participating in extracurricular activities later on once they felt more comfortable academically. Terenzini observed a difference among students in the importance of validating experiences, those experiences inside and outside of class with peers, faculty, and staff that make students feel as if they belong at the institution and their presence is beneficial to the institution. For students at the predominantly white schools, their acceptance to the institution was academically validating in and of itself, while students at the other school often sought further academic validating experiences. Students at the predominantly white universities more often looked for social validation than students from the other types of institutions.
**Latino/a Students**


Conducted at a highly selective university, this study aimed to discover factors that contributed to the success of “at-risk,” Latino, undergraduate students. Both male (n=15) and female (n=15) non-freshmen were interviewed about their college experiences. The students were divided into groups of 10 based on their parents’ education: one or more parents with fewer than eleven years of education (group 1); one or more parents with a high school diploma (group 2); and one or more parents with a college degree (group 3). Through a demographic questionnaire, an educational resiliency scale, and a semi-structured interview, Arellano and Padilla found that the most “at-risk” students, from groups 1 and 2, “were invulnerable to the negative consequences of educational risk” because of supportive families and faculty. Despite the overt and subtle racism that at least half of the respondents mentioned, all of the respondents succeeded at an elite university without disowning their cultural heritage. The final results of this study highlighted the importance of personal, family, and school resources in a Latino student’s circumvention of the “at-risk” label.


Arbona and Novy compared two groups of Hispanic first year college students on demographic and academic levels. The sample consisted of 141 Mexican American students and 45 non-Mexican American students attending a large public predominantly white university in the southwest. Despite the difference in socioeconomic status of their families (Mexican American students came from families of lower socioeconomic status than the other students), these groups had similar retention rates and academic performance. This is not consistent with previous findings. The authors suggest this may have to do with the fact that a larger percentage of the non-Mexican Americans in the group are foreign born and thus are not as fluent in English as the group of Mexican Americans (more of whom were born in the U.S). This study also did not look at national data, as previous studies have, and the cohort consisted of high SAT scoring students whose academic achievement was measured based on a short period of time (their first year).


In studying a sample of Black, Mexican-American, and White first year students attending a predominantly White southern University, Arbona and Novy found that White students’ persistence was predicted by noncognitive variables—nonacademic personal characteristics—(for example leadership qualities as measured by experience in leadership positions) while their academic success was predicted by academic variables (SAT scores). However, the same was not true for Black students, for whom noncognitive variables did not predict academic success or persistence. Noncognitive dimensions were not correlated with Mexican American students'
persistence either. Their first year GPAs were predicted by their SAT math scores and how
determined they were to obtain a college degree.

Arellano, Adele R. and Amado M. Padilla. “Academic Invulnerability Among a Select
Group of Latino University Students.” Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences. 18.4

Arellano and Padilla examined a group of 30 Latino/as attending a highly selective university
who were in their sophomore, junior, and senior years. The students were separated into three
groups. The first consisted of students whose parents had no more than 11 years of schooling. At
least one parent of the group two students had graduated from high school and the third group
of students had at least one parent who had graduated from college. All of the students were
involved to differing degrees in Latino community service programs. Those in group one and
two tended to take more active roles in supporting issues that affected their community while
group three students took less involved roles. Students from all three groups mentioned the
important role mentors played in their success, but for group one and two students theirs
were particularly crucial since they provided them with information about college that their
parents (not having attended college themselves) did not know about. The parents of group three
students could provide their children with that knowledge, but despite this, group three students
(along with the other two groups) would not have applied to private institutions were it not for
the urging of a teacher or counselor.

Hernandez, John C. “A Qualitative Exploration of the First-Year Experience of Latino

Hernandez interviewed 10 Latino/a first year students at a predominantly white state university.
The majority of participants (seven), he found, felt they were academically unprepared for
college despite having taken advanced placement courses in high school. Just four of the
students participated in extracurricular activities; four of the six who chose to opt out did so
because they wanted to focus on academics. Students had difficulty managing their time and
handling the stress they experienced as they sought high grades. They were dissatisfied with the
guidance and support provided by their institution. However their family members (both
immediate and extended) were key sources of support; with this in mind, Hernandez suggests
institutions involve Latino students’ families in programs through which they could become
better acquainted with the college, faculty, and curriculum. This would give them a greater
awareness of the challenges their children will face during their transition and provide them with
suggestions of further ways to support them.

Hernandez, John C. “Understanding the Retention of Latino College Students.” Journal of
College Student Development 41.6 (2000): 575-588.

Hernandez studied 10 Latino/a college students attending a large public predominantly white
research university. He formed a conceptual model of the relationship between 11 themes he
identified as being related to students’ retention. The central theme of students’ persistence was
that they wanted to and believed they could succeed. Most students received support from their
families, while others felt pressured by them to stay in college. Becoming involved in
extracurricular activities and finding a Latino community were important to their persistence. Also figuring prominently in the students' retention were their relationships with faculty and staff.


Examining over 2,400 students (1,825 of whom were White, 328 African-American, and 340 Chicano) who attended predominantly white institutions from 1985 to 1989, Hurtado observed differences in perceptions of racial tension among institution-types. For instance, students at private, four-year colleges perceived a better campus race climate than did students at public colleges and universities. Students who attended institutions they perceived as having “high student-centered priorities,” those that treat student aid and services as high priorities, tended to report lower levels of racial tension on campus. Chicano students were least likely to feel as if the institutions they attended had high student-centered priorities. Black students tended to perceive higher levels of racial tension on their campuses.


Hurtado and Carter used data from the National Survey of Hispanic Students to study how students’ background and experiences in their first and second years of college affect their sense of belonging in their third year. Having frequent discussions of course content with students outside of class was strongly correlated with Hispanic students’ sense of belonging in their third year, while working with a faculty member on a research project, having been a guest in a professor’s home, and working on an independent research project all were unrelated to students’ sense of belonging. Other experiences that were strongly correlated to higher levels of belonging in their third year were membership in student government, sports teams, and religious clubs. Those who described the campus environment as being characterized by racial and ethnic tension tended to have lower levels of a sense of belonging. Students who belonged to ethnic student organizations did not have significantly higher levels of sense of belonging than those students who were not members; the authors suggest that this may be because some students join these organizations in order to share their feelings of not belonging.


Using data from the National Survey of Hispanic Students, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, and interviews the authors studied a cohort of 203 Latino/a students (who were academically high achieving in high school) during their first year and at the end of their second year. Latino/a students who attended institutions with higher Hispanic populations were more likely to report having an easier time adjusting academically in their second year. Students’ perceptions of their campus racial climate affected their adjustment (on all four levels: academic, social, personal/emotional, and attachment). Perceptions of a hostile racial climate were
negatively associated with adjustment. Successfully managing their time, money, and schedules, and feeling as though their schoolwork as manageable were positively associated with academic and personal/emotional adjustment in their second year. Maintaining relationships with their families positively influenced students’ personal/emotional adjustment. In answer to the query of “What was most difficult about your first year,” 31% of students said adjusting academically to meet the new demands being made of them. The second most popular answer was maintaining and establishing social relationships (which includes homesickness), followed by time management. When asked who gave them the most support during their first year, 38% said their college peers, 28% said their family, and 15% said their friends.


In an effort to further comprehend the subgroup differences of students of color, 302 graduate and undergraduate students from five colleges and universities in Texas and California completed the Family of Origin Scale (FOS). Previous cross-cultural research suggests that comparing students of color with Anglo American culture establishes Anglo American culture as the norm “against which all other groups should be measured.” By comparing the students of color to one another, this assumption may be extinguished; however, the subgroup differences of each group make a multicultural understanding “compelling and complex.” The FOS, measuring the “perceived levels of family health, particularly as it relates to the constructs of family autonomy and intimacy,” was administered to 84 African Americans, 65 Asian Americans, and 153 Hispanic Americans. The variance on the scales of autonomy and intimacy within the three racial groups suggested that a multicultural understanding requires both the identification of predominate cultural characteristics and of crucial subgroup differences.


In comparing the experiences of 84 white students to a group of 124 Asian American, Latino, African and American first year students at the same college at two points in time—when they first arrive and at the beginning of the second semester—Kenny and Stryker found that white students reported larger social networks than either Asian or African American students. The support white students receive from their peers positively influenced their adjustment to college and their commitment to the college. The support students of color receive from their family positively affected their social and personal adjustment to college.


While previous research suggests that minority students experience a greater sense of alienation on predominately White campuses, these minority-status stresses promote the students’
formation of in-group friendships through joining ethnic organizations and spending time with peers of the same ethnic background. Although in-group friendships serve as a great support source for minority students, these friendships may emphasize the students’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination. In this four-year longitudinal study of White, Asian, Latino, and African American students at a large multiethnic university, the role of in-group friendships on students’ perception of discrimination and social and academic adjustment is explored. Data collection began with a survey administered at summer orientation, and the rest of the research was conducted through telephone interviews. The pre-college sample consisted of 748 Whites, 753 Asian Americans, 68 African Americans, and 255 Latinos. At the end of senior year, the sample consisted of 311 Whites, 389 Asian Americans, 67 African Americans, and 252 Latinos. Measures of in-group friendships and perceptions of ethnic discrimination were collected at the following times: pre-college, at the end of freshman year, at the end of sophomore year and junior year, and the end of senior year. The surveys also measured the students’ sense of belonging on campus, their academic commitment, and their academic success. The results demonstrated that Latino students with more in-group friendships “exhibited reduced belonging and academic performance” by their senior year. African American students who possessed more in-group friendships experienced “enhanced academic commitment and motivation” by their senior year.


Malaney and Shively examined the expectations and experiences of first year White, Black, Asian American, and Latino students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. They conducted telephone interviews of 377 students in their first semester and 407 in the spring semester. Their questions focused on students’ expectations before they arrived on campus and their later experiences as well as issues of racial harassment on campus. African American students had experienced more racial harassment than other groups and were significantly less likely than other students to feel that the University made adequate efforts to make them feel comfortable (and they became less likely to say so in the spring). African American students like Asian American students, held low expectations of receiving a degree. African Americans also expected to achieve a lower GPA than the White or Latino students and in the fall obtained a lower GPA than the White or Asian students. Latino students held the highest expected GPA of the four groups. Latino students' participation in extracurricular activities decreased from the fall to spring semester, whereas Black students’ participation increased. The percentage of Latino students who felt that they "definitely" made the right decision in attending the University dropped sharply in the second semester (a 30.6% decrease), while the percentages in other groups remained the same over the course of the year or increased. Asian Americans held low expectations for receiving a degree and lower expected GPA than White students and were also less likely than White or Latino students to feel part of the University community. Asian American students were significantly less likely than African Americans to have experienced racial discrimination and harassment.

In interviewing 12 Native American students and 12 Hispanic students who were juniors and seniors at a large southwestern university, Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel expand on Tinto's model of student departure to include the experience of minority students. Using structured open-ended interviews they found that students perceived their ethnicity as being located not only in their physical appearance but also in their family (immediate and extended) and friends of the same ethnicity. Their ethnicity constructed their sense of self, demarcated a stable spot in an ever-changing world, and filled them with a sense of pride. In light of this, the authors write that for some students of color finding social niches by joining cultural organizations, fraternities/sororities, or student government may be particularly important for some students of color.


By conducting a survey of 831 first year students, 10.7% of which were African American, 21.5% Asian American, 17% Hispanic, and 50.4% White, who attended a predominantly White Midwestern university, the authors studied how students’ perceptions of a hostile racial climate affected their academic/social experiences, academic/intellectual development, academic performance (GPA), goal/institutional commitment, and persistence. Discrimination and parental encouragement significantly affected the academic experiences of students of color. Students’ goal commitment was affected most by the level of parental support they received. The institutional commitment of students of color was most influenced by their academic experiences with faculty and staff, while for White students parental encouragement was most influential. Students’ persistence was significantly, directly affected by their cumulative GPA (for students of color and White students). When direct and indirect effects are added together, the largest total effect on persistence of White students was goal commitment. The largest total effect on the persistence of students of color was parental encouragement.


Using focus groups Terenzini examined 132 students from four institutions, two of which were predominantly white (one was a small, liberal arts college and the other was a large research university), another that was a predominantly black state university, and a fourth community college that had one-third Hispanic students, 18 percent African-Americans and three percent Native Americans. The focus groups revealed that first generation students—those who were the first in their family to attend college—found the transition to college, especially the academic transition, more difficult than traditional students—those who were not the first in their family to go to college. Perhaps anticipating the difficulty they would have with transitioning academically, many first generation students decided to initially forego participation in extracurricular activities in order to devote their energy and time to academics. These students anticipated participating in extracurricular activities later on once they felt more comfortable academically. Terenzini observed a difference among students in the importance of validating
experiences, those experiences inside and outside of class with peers, faculty, and staff that make students feel as if they belong at the institution and their presence is beneficial to the institution. For students at the predominantly white schools, their acceptance to the institution was academically validating in and of itself, while students at the other school often sought further academic validating experiences. Students at the predominantly white universities more often looked for social validation than students from the other types of institutions.


Using the Torres’ Bicultural Orientation Model (BOM) as a framework, this study hoped to answer the following questions: “(a) Does geographic location and institutional type have effects on students’ identification in the cultural orientation model?, and (b) Is there a difference in the level of stress reported by Hispanic American college students in the different cultural orientation?” Hispanic American students (n= 372) participated from three areas—two with Hispanic populations of over 60% (Texas and Florida) and multiple Georgia schools with a Hispanic population of less than 4%. Questionnaires, including two scales that assessed the cultural orientation of the students and the College Stress Inventory (CSI), were the primary instruments of the study. The results demonstrated that the Hispanic students in Georgia were more “acculturated to the Anglo culture,” because most of their peers were White. Although students from community colleges and comprehensive urban universities participated, the type of institution proved to play no significant role in the students’ cultural orientation. There appeared to be no relationship between the students’ various cultural orientations and their level of stress.
In the hopes of supplementing previous research regarding the personal growth of first and second-year college students, Terenzini and Wright assessed the relation of experiences in the first two college years to the students’ personal growth and the extent to which the influences on personal growth changed within these two years. Terenzini and Wright also hypothesized that the greater a students’ integration, as described by the Tinto model, the more likely a student would experience significant personal growth. The study was conducted at a large, selective, public research university in the Northeast and began in the summer of 1980 with a questionnaire asking the incoming class to describe their academic and personal background. The second questionnaire focused more on the students’ experiences during the year. Only the students’ responses (n=460) that followed all questionnaires were included in the study. The results suggested that the total effect of academic integration played a greater role on the freshman students’ personal growth than social integration. However, both aspects of integration were “positively and reliably related in both years to their reported personal development.”