Factors Impacting Ethnic Minority Student College Adjustment

Marta I. Krajniak, M.A.
School of Psychology, Fairleigh Dickinson University

College freshmen are faced with a myriad of new challenges and many struggle with the transition into college. A substantial number of individuals who enroll at a university fail to persist through graduation as a result of difficulties they encounter during their first year. Poor retention rates are especially striking among minority undergraduates. Understanding the obstacles to adjustment among incoming students of diverse backgrounds is crucial as the first step in preventing student dropout. This review examines literature on the impact of diversity issues on college adjustment with the hope of informing clinicians providing services to a diverse student population. Factors impacting minority freshmen are discussed and differences between specific groups are examined.

Introduction

Graduation from college is an important milestone as it improves the prospects of a career and financial security. Many individuals who enroll at a university, however, do not graduate. Research indicates that students who drop out often do so for personal reasons such as social and emotional factors related to poor adjustment to college (Bradburn, 2003; Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Kerr, Johnson, Gans, & Krunmne, 2004). As many as 30-40% of incoming freshmen leave college prior to obtaining a degree, with the majority of these students making the decision to drop out within their first year (Bradburn & Carroll, 2002; Consolvo, 2002). An examination of the obstacles that thwart adjustment to college among incoming students is a crucial first step to improving college retention rates.

College enrollment has increased by over 35% from 2000 to 2010, representing a rise of both majority and minority student matriculation (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The growing number of non-white undergraduates is posited to be a response to the changing ethnic and cultural landscape of the U.S., as well as to affirmative action policies (Santos, Ortiz, Morales, & Rosales, 2007). Increased enrollment, however, is not paralleled by graduation rates among minority students. While on average 60% of white students that register at a university graduate with a Bachelor's degree, only 49% of Hispanic students (Lynch & Engle, 2010a) and 40% of black students (Lynch & Engle, 2010b) earn their degrees. Similarly, while undergraduate enrollment has been increasing among Native Americans, persistence and graduation rates for these students are the lowest of all minority groups (e.g., as low as 15%; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Hunt & Harrington, 2010; Department of Education, 2008).

Despite the breadth of research investigating overall student college adjustment, focus has only recently turned to exploring the unique factors impacting ethnic and/or racial minority freshmen; examination of these obstacles has gained momentum since the passing of affirmative action policies that provide special opportunities for minorities in predominantly white universities. The following review examines the additional burdens to college adjustment faced by students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds underlying the disproportionate retention rates in this population. Although explicit treatment recommendations are beyond the scope of this article, the article highlights adjustment-related problems in the hopes that alleviating these difficulties with appropriate supports will improve retention rates of minority groups. In addition, given the diversity of populations subsumed under the broad racial categories typically used in research (e.g., black, Asian) this review notes the particular minority groups that were investigated, when such data were available, to illustrate distinct obstacles confronted by students from specific racial or ethnic backgrounds.

College Adjustment

Adjustment to college is generally used to encompass a variety of factors historically assessed in terms of student academic accomplishment and retention rates, and, more recently, by the use of integrative self-report measures. For example, Clark and Trow (1966) posited that the student's identification with their college (i.e., match in values and beliefs) is pivotal to a successful academic career. Tinto (1993), on the other hand, argued that academic and social integration, the level to which the student interacts with peers, faculty, and staff and adheres to the academic requirements, is central to an individual's persistence through graduation. Presently, there has been a movement towards an integrated assessment of college adjustment that takes into account academic, social, personal/emotional, and institutional attachment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Several integrative self-report questionnaires have been developed to evaluate students' adjustment to college, which yield an overall adjustment score as well as scores for the specific factors. Among these measures is the College Adjustment Scales (CAS; Anton & Reed, 1991). The CAS was designed to provide a screen for college counselors to distinguish students seeking help related to college adjustment from those with other problems. The College Adjustment Rating Scale (CARS; Zitzow, 1984) is a questionnaire that assesses four domains of perceived stress in the academic, social, personal, and family realms. The College Adjustment Test (CAT; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990) is a survey that assesses the degree to which students have experienced a variety of thoughts and feelings about being in college. Finally, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1998) is a self-report measure that addresses four aspects of college adjustment including academic, social, personal-emotional, and goal commitment-institutional attachment. The SACQ was developed to help identify students at risk for dropping out and is the most widely used measure of college adjustment in research (Credé & Niehorster, 2012).

A substantial body of research has explored factors predicting student college adjustment. Studies consistently identified undergraduates' academic per-

formance (Credé & Kuncel, 2008; Wintre & Bowers, 2007), institutional attachment (i.e., campus environmental aspects, involvement in campus organizations; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Wintre & Bowers, 2007), social adjustment (e.g., social support from peers, family and professors; Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Johnson, Gans, Kerr & LaValle, 2010; Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, & Madson, 1999), as well as personal and emotional factors (e.g., stress, depression; Beyers & Goossens, 2002; Brooks & DuBois, 1995) as directly and indirectly impacting students' level of successful adaptation to college. For instance, Alvan, Belgrave, and Zea (1996) demonstrated that among 77 undergraduates, satisfaction with social support was a significant predictor of overall college adjustment above and beyond stress experienced by these individuals. In addition, high school friendships appeared to be of vital importance during the first few weeks of college, whereas new college acquaintances were more predictive of college adjustment later in the year (Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008). Similarly, freshman GPA in 944 undergraduates predicted persistence to graduation (Wintre & Bowers, 2007), while lack of involvement in the first semester was inversely related to academic integration, institutional commitment, and persistence to graduation (Berger & Milem, 1999). Overall, these findings suggest that students who struggle academically, experience the campus environment as adverse, do not form sufficient formal and informal social connections, or who experience mental health problems during the transition into college might be at higher risk to leaving college before graduation.

Minority Student College Adjustment

A smaller body of mostly recent research has begun to demonstrate differences in college adjustment variables among students of diverse backgrounds. For example, Anglin and Wade (2007) found that adjustment to college was significantly lower for 141 black students compared to their white counterparts. Similarly, while overall college adjustment for 76 Native Americans was comparable to other undergraduates, institutional attachment among these students was significantly lower than that for a large Caucasian sample (Watson, 2009). African

American, Hispanic American, and Native American students were also found to have lower social adjustment and instuitional attachment when compared to Caucasian students (Hutz, Martin, & Beitel, 2007), while Chicano students had poorer social adjustment as compared to other Latino/a students (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Despite the clear disparities in college adjustment, especially in the area of social and intuitional attachment realms, between various ethnic minorities and Caucasian students, there is still a dearth of ad hoc investigation of the cross-cultural differences with research examining some ethnic and cultural groups, such as Arab Americans or Indian Americans, lacking completely.

Minority Students College Adjustment Factors

Considering the above findings, it is evident that poor college adjustment might be underlying the relatively low retention rates among minority students compared to their increased presence on university campuses. The emerging body of literature identified several variables that pose additional challenges to non-white students' assimilation into the undergraduate milieu including minority status stress, family/cultural factors, socioeconomic status (SES), and first generation college student status (Fischer, 2007; Greer & Brown, 2011; Walpole, 2003).

Minority Status Stress

Recently, researchers began inquiring whether the distinct characteristics of minority students might confer additional burden to transition into college. The increased matriculation rates of various ethnic and racial student groups imply that many non-white individuals are enrolling in historically white universities. As such, undergraduates of diverse backgrounds might face minority status stress– additional and unique sources of stress associated with their status as a minority and the experience of discrimination and racism, that interferes with college adjustment (Greer, 2008; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993).

Numerous findings support this argument. For instance, among 1,096 minority freshmen of African-American, Chicano, Latino, American Indian, and Filipino origin and 300 Caucasian matched students, minority undergraduates experienced significantly higher rates of covert and overt racism and discrimination than their white counterparts, which contributed significantly to psychological distress and to inferior college performance (i.e., GPA), over and above the effects of gender, SES, race, high-school GPA, and SAT (Smedley et al., 1993). Similarly, among Native American students enrolled in a community college, the stress and anxiety associated with the college racial dynamics (i.e., level of discrimination or racial acceptance) were inversely related to students' academic, social and personal-emotional college adjustment and institutional attachment (Watson, 2009). A 1-year longitudinal study also showed that 54 Latino/a freshmen experienced the campus racial climate as increasingly hostile over the first year (Lopez, 2005). Such perceived discrimination, in turn, resulted in the students' developing an alienated sociocultural orientation (i.e., students become more avoidant when presented with discussion or conflict regarding race), decreased assimilation (i.e., associating predominantly with students from same ethnic or cultural background), and turning to their Latino/a peers as a source of support. It is, thus, evident that minority undergraduates feel discriminated against on college campuses, and it is likely that such experiences negatively impact their satisfaction with the university, weaken affiliation with the institution, and discourage social interaction. Minority status stress, therefore, directly contributes to poor college adjustment among non-white students and might result in students leaving the institutions prior to graduation.

Differences across minority groups. While studies confirmed that minority status stress impacts students of various ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Arbona & Jimenez, 2013; Awad, 2010), comparative research also revealed differences in the nature, type, and level of this experience between various minority groups. For example, among 111 Asian Americans, 76 Latino/a Americans, 50 African Americans, reported minority status stress was higher in African American than Asian American and Latino/a American students (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013). Similarly, among 3,924 students enrolled across 23 U.S. universities, black students had significantly higher perceptions of negative racial climate than Asian and

Hispanic undergraduates, who had about an equal perception of negative racial climate, but still significantly higher than whites (Fischer, 2007). Further, black students are more likely to leave an institution due to the perception of racism than other minority students (Fischer, 2007). These findings indicate that although minority status stress affects various student groups, these experiences seem to be most prevalent among black undergraduates and profoundly impact their decision to leave the institution prior to graduation.

Some researchers suggested that perhaps it is not just the magnitude, but also the type, of discrimination perceived by distinct minority groups that differentially impacts their transition into college. In that vein, though some researchers demonstrated that Asian American students do not have adaptive problems related to minority stress (e.g., Cocchiara & Quick, 2004), others indicated that Asian Americans report higher impostor feelings than black or Latino/a American students that are a stronger predictor of psychological distress than minority status stress (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Cokley et al., 2013). Imposter feelings– the sense of intellectual phoniness, is believed to stem from the stereotype of Asian American students as the model minority who is intelligent, hardworking, high achieving, and academically striving. In contrast, Lopez (2005) found that Latino/a students experienced feeling that others perceived them as academically inferior and that they were admitted to the university only as a response to affirmative action. Further, whereas African American students perceived more hostility and less equitable treatment by faculty and staff, Latino/a and Asian Americans experienced discrimination in a less hostile way (i.e., limited respect and inequality; Ancis et al., 2000). Therefore, the specific stereotypes might be associated with the varied level of perceived minority status stress between different groups, their coping strategies, as well as retention rates.

Although most research on minority status stress addresses individuals with distinct physical characteristics (e.g., skin color), one study explored religious dress as a related factor. Rangoonwala, Sy, and Epinoza (2011) found that among 54 Muslim women, Muslim identity was inversely associated with college adjustment. Surprisingly, though, strict adherence to Islamic dress was positively associated with college adjustment. Given that over 80% of these students reported perceiving anti-Islamic attitude post 9-11, authors posited that an association with that culture resulted in an experience of discrimination and isolation that negatively impacted the student's college adjustment. The outward expression of acceptance of Muslim religion via Islamic dress, on the other hand, allowed students to identify each other and form communities that buffer students against minority stress especially in a university with a large Muslim population. While skin color is one factor impacting minority status stress, groups exhibiting other visible signs of minority status or adhering to culture-specific behaviors (e.g., praying before meals) may also experience discrimination that disrupt their social adjustment in college. Further, these findings also demonstrate that while minority status stress impacts students of various backgrounds, some individuals find their unique characteristics as a way to aggregate and support each other.

College campus factors. As noted above, the racial climate and the number of same-group minority students present at the specific university additionally impact the level of minority status stress. In a study of 160 Asian American, African American, and Latino/a American students in a predominantly white (90%) university, Wei and colleagues found that university environment was a significant mediator for the association between minority status stress and college persistence attitudes (i.e., students beliefs regarding the importance of and plans to complete college), beyond general stress, and that this pattern was similar for all ethnic groups (Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). Among 202 African American undergraduates, those attending a large predominantly white college in the Midwest endorsed higher minority status stress than those attending a historically black university in the Eastern U.S. (Greer & Brown, 2011). Further, institutional type was the strongest predictor of academic performance in this study. Conversely, African American freshmen at a predominantly black university reported better social, academic, and overall college adjustment than either African American or white freshmen at a predominantly white university, and better institutional attachment than Af-

rican American freshmen at a predominantly white university (Adan & Felner, 1995). Similarly, Rodriguez, Morris, Myers, and Cardoza (2000) examined whether minority-status stresses increases the risk of psychological maladjustment of Latino/a students at a university where Latinos constitute the largest ethnic group. Their results indicated that among 338 Latino/a (228 Mexican American, 110 Central American) undergraduates in a predominantly Latino school, minority status stress did not significantly impact the students psychological adjustment beyond demographic (i.e., gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity), sociocultural (i.e., level of acculturation), college role (i.e., generic college stress), and personal (i.e., lack of academic self-confidence) characteristics. Together, these findings further support the supposition that the racial climate of an institution has a direct impact on student college adjustment and retention rates, as those attending universities with a large same-group population endorse fewer problems perhaps due to lesser discrimination and/or more available support from other minority peers or faculty.

Racial identity. Since discrimination and racism associated with status stress is more likely to impact minority students in predominantly white universities, on-campus association with students of diverse backgrounds could be an effective coping strategy to buffer against minority status stress. Although increasing racial identity– the self-concept that incorporates individual's knowledge and acceptance of one's group's history, values, and practices, has been shown to be efficacious in buffering against minority status stress, research on racial socialization has also shown that internalizing racial identity (i.e., embracing only one's own racial identity) has a negative impact on black students' college adjustment whereas multicultural racial identity (i.e., embracing one's own racial identity and feelings of connectedness with other minority groups) positively affects these undergraduates' adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Similarly, among Native American students the ability to positively embrace one's own group identity and aspects of the dominant culture's identity had a positive correlation with academic and social adjustment as well as institutional attachment (Watson, 2009). Therefore, experience of minority status stress that

results in alienation from the majority group and exclusive reliance on in-group support interferes with the development on multiracial identity consequently negatively impacting student college adjustment. Moreover, Lopez (2005) found that in addition to racial discrimination from other students, Latino freshmen also experienced intragroup discrimination (e.g., "Why are you acting white?"). Achieving the balance between incorporating the ethnic-specific and majority group characteristics to gain both native and dominant group acceptance further complicates the social adjustment among minority freshmen.

Collectively, the available body of literature implicates minority status stress as negatively impacting college transition among undergraduates from diverse backgrounds, which might at least partially account for the high drop out rates among these students. The preponderance of extant work, however, focuses on black undergraduates and there is a dearth of research investigating minority status stress among Arab American, Indian American, and Native American students. It would be important to investigate whether, and if yes what type of, minority status stress impairs college adjustment for freshmen in these groups.

Socioeconomic Status

In addition to minority status stress, non-white students might experience the added burden associated with lower SES, which is often measured in terms of quality and level of education, parent occupation, and income. Research findings suggest that ethnic and/or racial minority students are more likely to come from households with low SES than white students (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001). For example, Fischer (2007) found that 55-65% of Asian and white students come from families that make an income of over $75,000 as compared to only about 42% of Hispanic and 37% of black undergraduates. In terms of college adjustment and persistence, low SES has been identified as a risk factor for inferior preparation for college (Fischer, 2007; Terenzini et al., 2001), poorer college academic achievement among freshmen (Smedley et al., 1993), as well as lower graduation rates (Mendez, Mendoza, & Malcolm, 2011; Terenzini et al., 2001). It is important to note, however, that classroom partici-

pation and involvement of lower SES students is similar to that of students with higher SES (Walpole, 2003), which suggests the need to focus on other reasons related to these students' drop out rates.

Several factors associated with low SES can impact students' adjustment and persistence to graduation. Financing college can be an additional stressor for undergraduates as many minority students depend on support from their families in paying school tuitions. Parents, family members, or money from personal savings covers about 63-64% of white and Asian undergraduates' college expenses, compared to only 43% of Hispanic and 33% of black students' educational cost (Fischer, 2007). In a study of 2,991 college students Latino/a (Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish/Hispanic Latino) undergraduates were more often concerned about financing their educations and to drop out of school for financial reasons than non-Latino students (Longerbeam, Sedlacek, &Alatorre, 2004). Similarly, a qualitative study by Guillory and Wolverton (2008) revealed that inadequate financial support was one of the major barriers to college graduation among Native American students. Mendez et al. (2011), on the other hand, demonstrated that availability of financial aid packages positively impacted college retention rates among Native American students, while Aguayo and colleagues found increased self-efficacy in Mexican American students who had better perceptions of financial resources (Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, & Flores, 2011). It is likely that lack of financial resources is another factor underlying the lower retention rates of minority students.

While lack of finances might directly result in dropping out, low SES can also indirectly negatively impact minority students' college adjustment. Longerbeam et al. (2004), for example, found that Latino/as were significantly more likely to work and to work longer hours while attending college than non-Latino/a students, and attributed needing to have a job to personal and family obligations (i.e., to earn money to support themselves, pay for tuition, and to send money home). Further, students from low SES were less likely to live in dormitories (Terenzini et al., 2001), with as many as 65% of Native American students residing off campus (Hunt &

Harrington, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that minority students have less time to study and to participate in on-campus activities due to the extra time devoted to working or commuting, both of which negatively impact college adjustment. Lastly, low SES students, especially those of minority status, frequently experience discrimination based on social class especially among white affluent universities (Ostrove & Long, 2007), which further impacts their comfort with joining social activities. Research findings generally support this postulation. For example, among 12,400 students from over 200 colleges low SES African American undergraduates had less contact with faculty, spent less time studying, were less involved in extracurricular activities, had lower grades and worked more hours than their high SES peers or all African American students (Walpole, 2008).

Research generally supports the notion that minority undergraduates are more likely to be of low SES and have more difficulty financing their education than other college students. Consequently, while some drop out of school others either work or reside at home with their families to make college affordable. Those students that find means to finance their educations might do so by sacrificing both academic and social college opportunities.

Family and Cultural Factors

While transition into college provides an opportunity for many students to become more independent of their families, for some enrollment at the university does not afford such freedom. In addition to residing at home for financial reasons, cultural norms, especially values regarding family interdependence and independence, might further complicate the transition into college for some minority groups. For instance, whereas in the white American culture individuality and independence might be stressed, the Hispanic culture emphases familismo in which youth are expected to prioritize family needs and spend considerable time with their families and provide emotional, financial, and personal support to family members. Similarly, many Asian cultures emphasize collectivism, and, although a wide variability exists within the black community, family needs are typically prioritized over other responsibilities. Under-

graduates from backgrounds stressing family inter-dependence might be required to run errands, work, care for siblings, or attend to other family obligations rather than studying or engaging in academic or extracurricular activities. Thus, culture-specific family dynamics can put an additional strain on the transition into college for some minority groups, especially for students for whom cultural norms and family expectations clash with the demands of college life.

In line with this supposition, Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, and Chen (2010) investigated students' perceptions of family agency among 515 freshman students of East Asian American, West Asian American, Filipino/Pacific Islander American and European American descent. While shared agency was defined as parental support, collaboration, or accommodation in regards to educational goals, non-shared agency was described as parent un-involvement or direction/control of the goals. Their findings indicated that all Asian American students reported higher levels of perceived non-shared agency, specifically of parental directing, and lower levels of shared agency, than European American students. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that poorer college adjustment among the Asian American cohort emerged as a direct result of the students' perceptions of agency with parents. Such findings suggest that discord between the students' and the families' college goals might result in the undergraduates' difficulties in adjustment and eventual decision to withdraw from a university.

Further, while all students shared the common goals of attending college as a means for gaining money in the future, obtaining a good job or a career, and for personal growth and learning, Asian, Latino/a, and African American minority students reported also being motivated to attend college to help their families and to prove one's self-worth (Phinney, Dennis, & Osorio, 2006). Relatedly, Tseng (2004) found that among U.S. born children, Asian Pacific Americans placed more importance on family interdependence than did European Americans with no differences between Latino, African/Afro-Caribbean American and European American students, whereas students with non-American parents valued interdependence more than those with parents born in the U.S. with no differences among

the minority groups. The study also demonstrated that those with higher family interdependence spent more time on family obligations, and although attitudes about family obligations contributed to greater academic motivation among youth from immigrant, compared to U.S.-born, families the greater behavioral demands experienced by that group had negative impact on academic achievement and academic adjustment. Thus, although initially family factors might contribute to minority students' reasons to attend college, the added responsibilities or pressure might eventually interfere in college adjustment.

Although scarce, studies also indicate that Native American students struggle to navigate between the demands of college and cultural or tribal expectations (Juntunen et al., 2001; Hunt & Harrington, 2010). For instance, Hunt and Harrington (2010) described a mismatch between tribal values of independence and the need to form social and institutional attachments while transitioning into college that might result in students' loneliness and isolation. Native American undergraduates reported feeling isolated from their tribal culture and simultaneously alienated from faculty and students on the college campus, which negatively impacts their adjustment and retention rates (Thompson, Johnson-Jennings, & Nitzarim, 2013). Clearly, cultural factors might not only directly conflict with the students' goals and college responsibilities, but might also guide their decisions regarding seeking assistance or resources on campus.

A quantitative study of 132 diverse students by Terenzini et al. (1994) nicely demonstrated the complex nature of transition into college for minority students. The content of the study's focus groups indicated that for many white students going to college is seen as the continuation of a family tradition, whereas minority students experienced going to college as a "break" from tradition. Additionally, minority students' accounts highlighted the conflicting experience of, on the one hand, feeling that their family was supportive of their college career, and on the other, experiencing difficulty maintaining family responsibilities while meeting academic demands.

Together these findings indicate that culture-specific family factors, such as parental expectations, goals, and involvement might negatively impact stu-

dents' ability to perform academically and to assimilate into the college milieu. Further, students who tend to place more value on their family obligations might experience more severe conflict between their college responsibilities and family expectations. Future research needs to investigate the additional impact of immigrant status on the relationship between family values and minority students' college adjustment, as the distinction between immigrant and native-born minority groups is rarely made in studies.

First Generation College Students

Finally, minority students are often the first ones in their family to attend college (Terenzini et al., 2001). Among almost 4,000 students only 9% of white and 16% of Asian students were the first in their family to go to college, compare to 30% of Hispanic and black students (Fischer, 2007). Native Americans are even more likely to be the first in their family to go to college (Hunt & Harrington, 2010). Minority freshmen who are first generation college students are at a further disadvantage compared to those who can draw from their parents' or siblings' college experiences and support.

Parents who have no college experience are often ill equipped or lack the vital information to assist their children in the transition into higher education. For instance, among 100 minority (84 Latino, all Mexican or Central American; 16 Asian, all Chinese or Chinese/Vietnamese) first-generation students whose parents did not complete college, students perceived their peers as better able than their family members to provide the support they needed in order to succeed in college (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). Similarly, friends, not family support moderated the effects of stress on psychological adjustment in Mexican and Central American Latino/a college students (Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003). Therefore, first-generation college students might not be able to count on their parents' ability to assist them in college-related matters. Additionally, these individuals have the additional burden of stress associated with forming interpersonal connections at college as means of support regarding the transition into the university, and might be at an increased risk of dropping out if such social connections are not attained.

Importantly, many minority students might have foreign-born parents who, although have obtained higher degrees, had different experiences than those of their U.S. born children. For instance, Fischer (2007) found that over 60% of Asian students have at least one foreign born parent, as compared to 50% of Hispanic students, 20% of black students, and 9% of white students. Therefore, many minority students with foreign-born parents might share experiences similar to those of first-generation college students.

Collectively, these results suggest that first-generation college students and first generation American undergraduates are at a disadvantage regarding college preparation. Those who are experiencing academic and adjustment problems and require guidance must rely on other students for support, rather than their parents. Familial conflict, stress, or resentment might also emerge when freshmen seeking help from their parents regarding college-related issues are faced with misguidance or lack of aid.

Differences Across Minority Groups

A comprehensive longitudinal study by Fischer (2007) investigated not only the specific disadvantages minority groups face when compared to their white counterparts, but, more importantly, how these factors differentially impact students' college adjustment across various ethnic groups. Fischer utilized data of 3,924 students from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen who entered 28 US universities in 1999. An equal number of randomly selected white, black, Hispanic, and Asian freshmen from each institution were selected who were assessed at the beginning of the first year of college, the spring semester of freshman year, and each following spring through graduation.

Fischer's results underline several noteworthy differences among these racial groups. Specifically, analyses revealed that being a first-generation college student significantly impacted grades (e.g., was related to lower grades) for white and Hispanic students but not for black and Asian students, and that for the former having at least one foreign-born parent was related to higher grades. The latter finding is consistent with work by Tseng (2004) demonstrating that parents' immigration status is related to increased

motivation to achieve academically. These results may indicate that for some minority students such familial motivation might buffer against the difficulties associated with being a first-generation student.

Overall, for all students, dropping out of college was more strongly related to experiences at college rather than pre-college variables (e.g., number of AP courses in high school), but the specific factors varied by group. For instance, having friends reduced the risk of leaving college for all students (white and minority). Being involved in extracurricular activities decreased chances of dropping out by 83% for all minority students, but not white students, and was stronger for Asians and blacks. For white and black students having more social ties outside of the college environment during the freshman year had a negative impact on college grades and increased the chances of drop out, whereas these ties were not related to Hispanic and Asian students' grades. As reviewed above, Hispanic students seek same group peer support as a result of perceived discrimination as well as guidance in college-related matters and might be an effective coping mechanism for this group. Similar dynamics might be responsible for lack of negative impact on grades for Asian students with strong social supports outside of the university. For black and white students, however, seeking external support might result in decreased involvement in on-campus social interactions and thus adversely impact college adjustment and institutional attachment, which is consistent with work by Swenson et al. (2008). The preponderance of evidence suggests that intervening at the college level, instead of prior to enrollment, is necessary as fostering college adjustment significantly improves minority students' retention rates.

Further, having informal on-campus ties with one's own ethnic group was negatively associated with Hispanic student's grades but in-group ties were positively related to Asian students' academic performance. This difference, as noted earlier, could be related to within group discrimination among some Latino students (Lopez, 2005), whereas for Asian undergraduates association with same culture students might mitigate the experience of feeling like an imposter. Lastly, being involved in more extracurricular activities was positively related to all minority groups'

grades, as compared to whites, supporting the notion that institutional attachment and involvement plays an especially important role in minority students' college adjustment. In terms of college satisfaction, involvement in on-campus activities was the strongest predictor for black and Hispanic students, but only marginally relevant to Asian students' college satisfaction.

Thus, differences emerge among minority students when addressing off- and on-campus social relationships. Overall formal on campus involvement with professors, study groups, organizations, athletics, and other activities for minority students might be most efficacious in improving academic performance, satisfaction with college, and retention rates. The necessity and extent of own-group interactions, however, might depend on the particular minority student. Increasing socialization with students of other and diverse backgrounds might constitute an important part of improving college adjustment and consequently retention rates of all minority students.

Clinical Implications and Future Research

The scope of research on college adjustment has expanded vigorously over the past two decades, recently including the exploration of obstacles faced by minority undergraduates. The available body of literature on the topic clearly implies that students of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds are more likely to face discrimination, be of low SES, have to navigate cultural and familial expectations that might conflict with their academic demands, and more often have parents who did not attend college than white undergraduates, resulting in additional stress with the already challenging transition into college. These additional complexities have been linked with poorer college adjustment among minority students and as potential causes for their higher drop out rates. Further, the above-described research demonstrates that various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups are differentially impacted by these variables and effective coping with such obstacles might differ widely.

One resource available to students that are struggling with college adjustment is counseling and, thus, clinicians working with minority students should be aware of the particular perceptions and unique expe-

riences of individuals to meet the distinctive needs of each undergraduate. In that vein, clinical programs should integrate into their curricula a throughout exploration of factors impacting college adjustment and train mental health workers in assessing and counseling freshmen facing such difficulties. Related professional organizations should also disseminate emerging research and offer specialized continuing education courses to professionals serving minority college students. Therapists should be sensitive to and strive to identify the particular struggles of each student, as well as access to resources, and work on developing coping strategies appropriate for each minority undergraduate. Appropriate intervention during the initial stages of transition into college may affect the trajectory of the student's college career (academic performance, social engagement, and retention rates) and thus have significant life-long consequences.

Research on the unique factors adversely impacting minority students' college adjustment, however, is still in it nascence. Significant limitations of the current body of research include the lack of distinction between various sub-cultures subsumed within the broad racial labels of black, Asian, and Hispanic. Future research needs to recognize the uniqueness of the many ethnic and cultural groups that fall under such categories and conduct studies to inform how students from various cultures differ or are alike in their ability to transition into college. This can be achieved by allowing individuals to self-describe their particular ethnic, racial, or cultural group membership instead of forcing them to select one of the few broad categories. Additionally, the sample sizes of many of the more discrete minority groups are small and there is a dearth of studies on some cultures, such as the Native Americans and Arab Americans. As the presence of these groups on college campuses increases, minority student participation in research should also flourish enabling researchers to access individuals from a greater array of backgrounds. Lastly, although the literature includes several qualitative and longitudinal studies, the majority of research exploring minority issues in college adjustment and persistence to graduation entails correlational studies utilizing self-report measures, many of which have not been designed to assess the unique challenges faced by minority undergraduates. Future research should focus on developing measures of college adjustment that inquire regarding the experience of minority status stress, specific family and cultural factors, SES, and difficulties associated with being an immigrant or first in the family to enroll in a university in addition to the academic, social and personal adjustment and institutional attachment factors assessed by the extant measures.

The above-mentioned studies also raised the issue of the potential difference between immigrant and U.S. born minority groups. Unfortunately, the available research rarely distinguishes between native- and foreign-born undergraduates. Immigrant status, however, can have a significant impact on college adjustment. For instance, Aguayo et al. (2011) found that first generation Mexican-American students had lower levels of perceived self-efficacy than second-generation college students. Therefore, future research should bear in mind and distinguish the additional impact acculturation might have on minority students' college adjustment.

There is a plethora of other variables that further impact student college adjustment. This review excluded gender, sexual orientation, substance use, and other relevant factors that interact with the above-mentioned stressors. Future research should attempt to integrate the present findings and such additional factors and examine how different variables interact in either posing further challenges or affording unique strengths in the process of transitioning into college.

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