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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Persistence of Latino Students in Community Colleges:
An Empowerment Model Addressing Acculturative Stress

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the Doctor of Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

Judy C. Wilson

Committee in Charge:

Paula Levin, Chair
Amanda Datnow
Tom Humphries

2012

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The dissertation of Judy C. Wilson is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

DEDICATION

For those who work for educational equity.

EPIGRAPH

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

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Lastly, I am grateful to the students who gave of their time and shared their experiences so that I could come to a better understanding of what might be valuable to them in their academic lives. They reminded me of why I enjoy teaching as an opportunity to learn from my students as much as to teach them.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Persistence of Latino Students in Community Colleges:
An Empowerment Model Addressing Acculturative Stress

by

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Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Paula Levin, Chair

College student persistence has been a concern of researchers and practitioners since the early 1960s. Traditional models have addressed the need for students to be integrated into the academic and social domains of the college campus. Recently, critical theorists and researchers have been questioning the relevance of the traditional

models for students of color. The development of student empowerment through the establishment of student-initiated retention projects and the support of institutional agents has been proposed as a more meaningful goal to increase the persistence of students of color. Ethnic student organizations have also been shown to be important in giving students of color a sense of belonging. While acculturative stress has been shown to be a factor in the well-being of Latino students, it has not been considered as a contributor to persistence decisions.

This study used mixed methods to collect data from surveys and interviews of Latino community college students. Analysis of this data showed that persistence is negatively correlated to acculturative stress. Additionally, certain acculturation strategies play a role in the persistence decisions of students. Both traditional and emerging models of persistence are compared in order to propose a new model which includes consideration of acculturative stress and student empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Look to your left, look to your right, because one of you
won't be here by the end of the year.

Although this quote has been attributed to many speakers who were addressing students at selective universities, it could be used for the orientation sessions at most community colleges. The majority of students who leave college do so in the first year (Tinto, 1993). Slightly less than half (46%) of all students starting at a community college will stop attending college before achieving their academic goals even within six years after first enrolling (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless & Shepherd, 2010).

Most Latino students begin their postsecondary education at community colleges (Quintana, Vogel & Ybarra, 1991). More than half of Latino students (55%) will leave college before completing their goals of getting a certificate or degree (Radford, et al., 2010). For working-class Latino students, the college environment can be very different from their neighborhood and home culture (Tierney, 2000). They often experience stress as they are pressured to acculturate into the middle-class white culture which is dominant at most colleges.

Over the last forty years, college persistence has been a topic of study based on theories of the interaction between the college and the student. Most theories attempted to explain student departure as the result of a poor fit between these two entities (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1975, 1993). The college, as an institution, provided opportunities for academic and social involvement, and the student became “integrated” into the institution by engaging with the institutional programs. More

recently, there have been some new theories proposed that challenge the idea that this integration model works equally well for all students.

Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) have proposed a model of student empowerment which is less about integration of the student into the institutional norms and practices, and more about supporting the student to become aware of her own cultural norms and practices so that she may become an agent of social change. While this model acknowledges the need for students to learn how to work within the academic culture, the way they do so is very different than the traditional college adjustment theories would suggest. In the Maldonado study, student organizations that focus on empowerment of minority students play a role in increasing student retention.

Stanton-Salazar (2010) has also proposed that empowerment is necessary for working-class, minority students. His model defines the role of institutional agents who can become “empowerment agents” (p. 27) when they contribute to the student’s sense of efficacy and facilitate critical questioning of the status quo. Students learn to navigate the college culture as they are actively engaged with these institutional agents who have successfully achieved positions of power in the institution.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Latino students in community college with regards to their interactions with institutional agents and student organizations. Through interviews and surveys, the students gave their perceptions of these interactions. Additionally, students were assessed for their experiences of acculturative stress. The role of institutional agents and student

organizations on predicted persistence were measured for students assessed as having acculturative stress.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is critical theory. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) explain their “reconceptualization” of critical social theory as being concerned with “issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system” (p. 90).

According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2002), critical research is related to the empowerment of individuals. This type of research attempts to confront injustice and becomes transformative. The research questions, methodology, and data analysis in this study were shaped by critical theory that has the “ability to disrupt and challenge the status quo” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 87).

Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) use critical theory to examine the traditional integrationist perspective on student persistence (Tinto, 1975). Their research on student-initiated retention projects (SIRP) was conducted to propose new theoretical understandings about supporting students of color to persist in college. They found that there were three theoretical critiques of the integrationist model which were central to the leaders of the SIRP:

1. The notion of leaving cultural heritage and identity behind in the development of social and cultural capital needed in college rather than a deepening of the cultural capital of the students.

2. The idea that the process of integration is an individual rather than a collective experience.
3. The concept of education as passive reception of pre-determined knowledge rather than a “transformative and revolutionary” (p. 632) practice of challenging the power system.

These three challenges to the integration model are central to this study in that they delineate the criteria used to define student empowerment. Empowerment is proposed as a relevant construct in considering what might contribute to college persistence, particularly for students of color.

Positionality

I have been a community college psychology teacher for eight years. I am a tenured faculty member at the college where this study is being conducted. I also serve on the Hispanic Serving Institution committee as one of the faculty coordinators. I have developed a collegial relationship with the advisors for the MEChA club on campus and have attended some of the Latino activities on campus. As a middle-aged, middle-class white faculty member, I am not an insider to the groups I am studying, but I tried to gain greater understanding of their lived experiences by listening to them, learning from them, and being a part of their routines. Since I was not teaching any classes during the time of data collection, I did not have any of the participants as current students.

My interest in this topic of study began when I attended a Latino student panel at my college. I heard the stories of students who were distressed by their

circumstances which included discrimination and pressure to assimilate. I left that meeting thinking that studying the plight of these marginalized students would be important. Then I went to one of the MEChA meetings (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán student organization) and saw the same students bringing their talents and strengths to bear on running an organization and being politically active. They did not appear marginalized at all, but seemed to be empowered by the group and the advisors who were respectful and encouraging. I was drawn to the seeming paradox of students who had considerable barriers to overcome and yet, they were more than just functioning; they were thriving.

Ethnic Terminology

In general, “Hispanic” refers to people who have origins in Spanish-speaking countries and “Latino” is a similar term that mitigates some negative connotations associated with Hispanic and is more politically progressive (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002). The term “Chicano” refers to people of Mexican heritage and has been used in a derogatory manner in the past, but now is used as a term indicating pride in Mexican cultural heritage. Particularly, student organizations such as MEChA use the term Chicano in this way.

The use of the terms “Latino”, “Hispanic” and “Chicano” in this paper reflect the preference of the referenced authors or participants. When using my own preference, I use Latino to refer to the heterogeneous groups who are from Spanish-speaking countries or are descendants of Spanish-speaking people. Even though the term, “ethnic minority”, is problematic in many ways, I use it in this paper to refer to

people who are members of groups traditionally categorized as minorities in the United States: people of Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and African descent. “Students of color” is a term used by some researchers to refer to ethnic minority students and is used in sections of this paper when citing the work of those researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to place this study in context of previous scholarly work, I review the literature on college student persistence, social capital, acculturative stress, student-initiated retention projects, and institutional agents. Since the traditional models of college persistence have been shown to be less relevant for ethnic minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), it makes sense to evaluate how concepts such as acculturative stress and social capital may be helpful in proposing new models based on empowerment strategies such as those used in student-initiated retention projects and by institutional agents.

College Student Persistence

According to Hoachlander (2003), the findings of several longitudinal studies of students enrolled in U.S. community colleges showed that 90% of these students intended to earn a formal credential (certificate or associate degree) or to transfer to a 4-year college or university. One of these studies (Berkner, He & Cataldi, 2002) revealed that six years after enrollment, only 36% of the surveyed students had reached their credential goals and another 17% were still enrolled at a postsecondary institution. These statistics indicate that there is a 53% persistence rate (persistence defined as credential attainment and/or continued enrollment) or a 47% student departure rate. A 2010 report on college persistence (Radford, et al.) shows almost the same rates for a more recent cohort of community college students (54% persistence and 46% departure). With just slightly more than half of community college students having this type of success, there has been considerable research and intervention

efforts focused on how to increase college persistence rates (Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Persistence Theories

This issue of students leaving college before completing their degrees became a topic of research interest in the early 1960s (Berger & Lyon, 2005). These early studies of student departure focused on the individual characteristics of the departing students to explain the decision to leave college (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The theory behind these studies was that students who “dropped out” of college did so as a result of personal failure. According to Tinto, this theory was not well supported by the research findings. In Tinto’s interactionalist model (1975, 1993), the environment is as important a factor in the student’s decision to leave. Tinto states that many researchers agree that “the institution, in its behavioral and normative manifestations, has as much to do with the failure of students as do the students themselves” (p. 91)

According to Berger and Lyon (2005), Tinto’s model of student departure is the best known and the most cited theory related to college student persistence. This model combined the psychological perspective of previous work with organizational theory models. Since his theory is so well accepted and influential among researchers and practitioners, the majority of this section focuses on his work.

Tinto’s model is based on Van Geenep’s (as cited in Tinto, 1993) classic study of the stages of passage from membership in one group or status to another in tribal villages. This process has three stages: separation, transition and incorporation. As

applied to student adjustment to college, the stages would be descriptive of the process students go through as they move into the college community and adapt to the norms and practices of the institution. There is an assumption in this theory that students must leave their home community and make the transition to membership in the college community. This assumption is challenged in critiques of Tinto's model (e.g., Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Particularly, there are questions about the need to separate from home communities in order to become members of the college community. While Tinto acknowledges that the separation stage may not be the same for non-residential students (commuters), he insists that there is at least a social or intellectual leaving of past communities even for these students. He also mentions that students from ethnic minority groups may find separation and transition particularly difficult. These students may never reach the final stage of incorporation and will be more vulnerable to leaving college before reaching their goals, according to Tinto.

Tinto (1993) also drew on Spady's (1971) application of Durkheim's (1951) work on suicide. Spady used Durkheim's typology of suicide to study the effects of isolation on college students' persistence. Specifically, the lack of social and intellectual integration into the college community was shown to increase students' likelihood to leave college. This integration does not require a total acceptance of the college community values and practices, but it does mean that students must find membership in some campus community in order to receive the support needed to persist. Attinasi (1989) describes the process of "getting to know" (p. 263) where

students find mentors (more advanced students) and peer guides to help them make connections and find their way around the campus. This process can facilitate social integration.

Tinto (1993) explains that the academic and social systems of a college have formal and informal functions. In the academic system, the classroom and labs provide a setting for the formal interactions between faculty and students. The informal academic function occurs as students set up their own study groups or meet with faculty outside the classroom to discuss academic issues. The formal social system may include extracurricular clubs and activities while the informal social functions would be represented in the friendships and non-sponsored groups that meet for social purposes. Both formal and informal systems contribute to the academic and social integration of the student. Tinto (1993) acknowledges that these systems are “invariably interwoven” (p. 109).

Figure 1 shows Tinto’s model and the expected interactions between the student and the institutional systems. The model is representative of the sociological theory underlying its development. On the left side of the figure are the boxes that represent the individual characteristics of the student, then the individual intentions and commitments, followed by the environmental factors (the academic and social systems) that the student encounters in the institution and the resulting integration which then influences the individual intentions and commitments and, ultimately, the departure decision. It is this interaction of individual and environment which gives explanatory power to Tinto’s model.

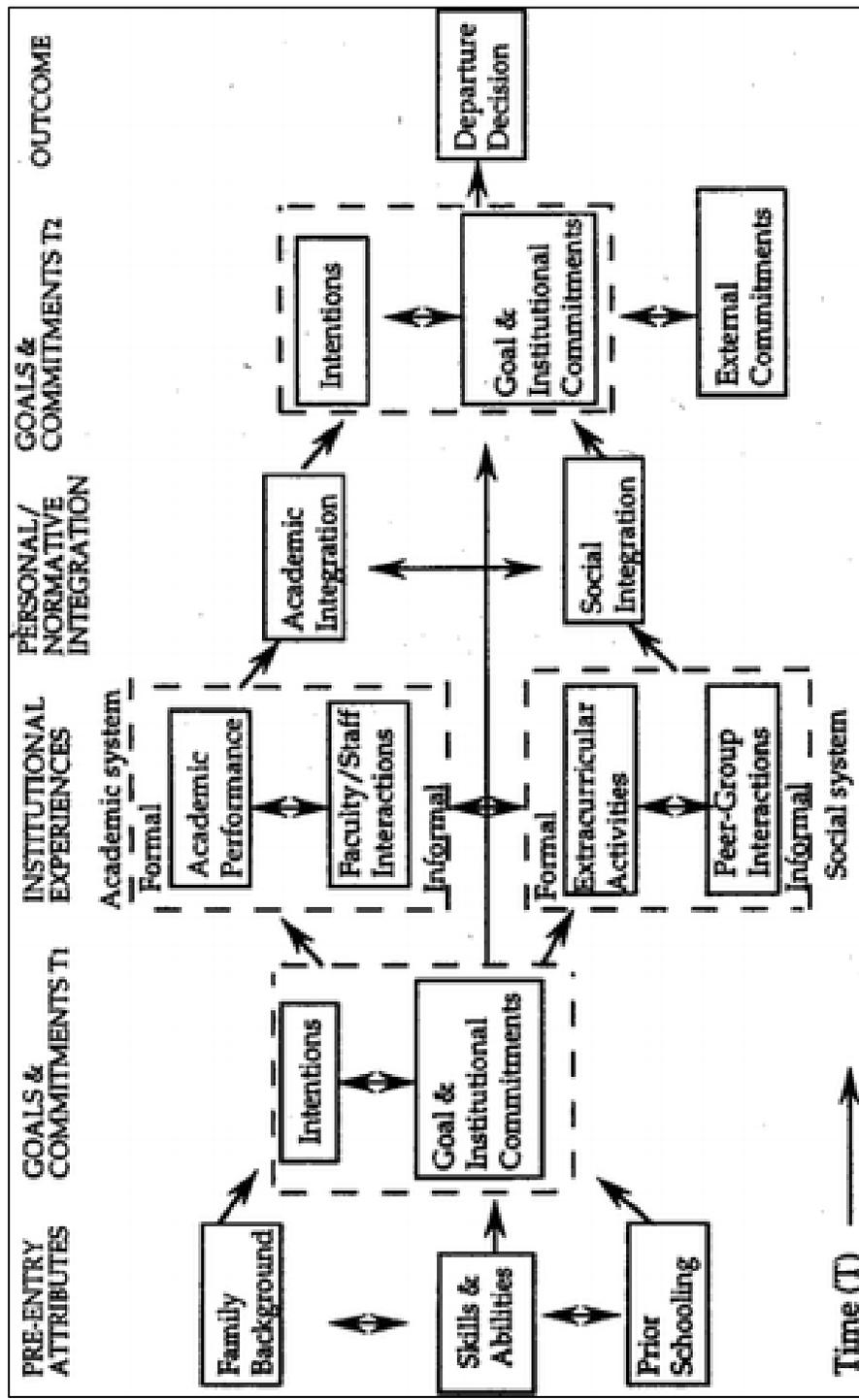


Figure 1. Tinto's Model of Voluntary Student Departure

Tinto does not claim that students must be fully integrated into both academic and social systems in order to persist, but just that they must have some degree of integration in both. This integration is symbolized by membership in college communities. If a student can find one “communal niche” (Tinto, 1993, p. 121) in which she can participate, she is more likely to persist in college. Tinto also points out the finding that this type of niche is even more crucial for ethnic minority students. The more communities in which students participate, the more likely it is that they will not leave before degree attainment.

Astin’s (1984) theory of involvement is related to Tinto’s notion of integration. Astin defines involvement as the physical and psychological energy that a student gives to such activities as studying, participating in student organizations, and interacting with faculty members and other students. Astin (1975) found that it is important for students to identify with the college environment because this identification indicates that the school is a good “fit” for the student. A student is more likely to become involved if they have a sense that they belong in the college culture.

Both Tinto and Astin agree that involvement matters. They argue that interaction with faculty and students increase the likelihood of persistence. As Tinto (1998) concludes, when interactions are positive and students feel validated, they are more likely to persist.

Persistence Gap

The persistence rate for Hispanic students is less than the persistence rate for all students combined (see Table 1). Fischer (2007) gives several reasons that black and Hispanic students may have more difficulty in adjusting to the college environment at predominantly white institutions. They are, more often than white students, first generation college students, lower in socioeconomic status, and they have stressful experiences related to being a minority student, such as stereotyping and discrimination. Fischer goes on to state that the differences in student departure rates between underrepresented minority students and white or Asian students is only partially explained by the family and educational background of the students. There are also aspects of the college environment which contribute to the differences in persistence. When there are major differences in the culture of the college and the home culture of the student, he argues, the college environment can feel alienating to the student. Fischer sums up this claim with the following statement. “It would seem that race and ethnicity have a fundamental impact on how college is experienced by minority students and therefore their adjustment process cannot be assumed to be the same.” (p. 128)

Table 1. Community College Students’ Persistence (2003-04 sample)

	Attained Credential	Still Enrolled	Total Persistence	Student Departure
All Students	34%	20%	54%	46%
Hispanic Students	26%	21%	47%	53%

Source: Radford, et al. (2010). U.S. Department of Education

Acculturative Stress

Most students experience a period of adjustment to the college environment (Tinto, 1993), but beyond the common stresses of time management, academic demands, and financial stresses, ethnic minority students may also experience additional stresses which can affect their academic success (Smedley, Myers & Harrell, 1993). The college environment and level of support for minority students can make a difference in the degree that students experience this type of stress (Datnow & Cooper, 1997).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe psychological stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” (p. 19). This definition has also been used by researchers in the field of stress-coping in more recent studies (Miranda & Matheny, 2000).

Williams and Berry (1991) describe the concept of acculturative stress as a type of stress “in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation, often resulting in a particular set of stress behaviors that include anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion” (p. 634). Some sources of this type of stress are related to incongruence of the cultural values and practices of the dominant and minority cultures, language difficulties, and experiences of discrimination (Gil, Vega & Dimas, 1994). Recent immigrants most often experience this type of stress, but it also occurs in later generations (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado,

1987; Padilla, Alvarez, & Lindholm, 1986). In one study of immigrant college students, the most distressing factors were perceptions of discrimination and feeling like an outsider (Mena, et al., 1987).

Latino college students experience acculturative stress as they are exposed to cultural differences, such as conflicting value systems, language difficulties, and discrimination, on predominantly white campuses (Crockett, et al., 2007; Mena, et al., 1987; Saldaina, 1994). The level of stress any individual student experiences may be dependent on the type of ethnic identity she has developed (Mossakowski, 2003) at the point of entering college and the social support she accesses (Williams & Berry, 1991). Biculturalism (high level of acculturation and strong ethnic identity) seems to mediate the effects of acculturative stress (Bautista de Domanico, Crawford & De Wolfe, 1994).

A Cultural Perspective

Kuh and Love (2000) use a cultural lens to look at student departure and propose that alternative models are needed to more accurately explain departure decisions made by minority students. In critique of Tinto's model (1975, 1993), they encourage new operational definitions of academic and social integration and greater focus on institutional responsibility for creating a hospitable campus climate. Their propositions are shown in Table 2.

These cultural propositions focus on the concept of cultural distance which is the degree of difference between the cultural experiences of the student before she comes to college and the experience of the campus culture. The likelihood that a

Table 2. Cultural Propositions about Premature Student Departure

-
1. The college experience, including a decision to leave college, is mediated through a student's cultural meaning-making system.
 2. One's cultures of origin mediate the importance attached to attending college and earning a college degree.
 3. Knowledge of a student's cultures of origin and the cultures of immersion is needed to understand a student's ability to successfully negotiate the institution's cultural milieu.
 4. The probability of persistence is inversely related to the cultural distance between a student's culture(s) of origin and the cultures of immersion.
 5. Students who traverse a long cultural distance must become acclimated to dominant cultures of immersion or join one or more enclaves.
 6. The amount of time a student spends in one's culture of origin after matriculating is positively related to cultural stress and reduces the chances they will persist.
 7. The likelihood a student will persist is related to the extensity and intensity of one's sociocultural connections to the academic program and to affinity groups.
 8. Students who belong to one or more enclaves in the cultures of immersion are more likely to persist, especially if group members value achievement and persistence.
-

Source: Kuh & Love, 2000, p. 201

student will persist in college in less when that distance is great. For instance, if a student has been taught in their home not to challenge what older people say, and yet in the college classroom she is required to speak up and argue her viewpoint, that student would experience stress about whether to abandon the culture of origin value in order to be successful in the classroom. If the student encounters enough of these stressful situations, she might be more likely to leave college, according to Kuh and Love's theory. Students who continue to live in their cultures of origin (family, school, community, etc.) experience additional stress as they often have to negotiate

between the cultural meaning-making systems and cultural values of home and college.

However, Kuh and Love also propose that joining an enclave or affinity group, such as an ethnic student organization, can make it more likely that students will persist. Researchers have begun to study how these types of organizations contribute to student persistence. One such model which has shown great promise is Student-Initiated Retention Projects (Maldonado, et al., 2005).

Student-Initiated Retention Projects

Tinto's model (1993; see Figure 1) is an interactionist retention theory based on acculturation/assimilation theory (Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). The applicability of the model for minority students has been questioned (Nora, 1987). Particularly, the roles of academic and social integration are problematic when students must abandon their cultural heritage and values in order to become integrated with the campus culture. Tinto acknowledges that students do not have to become fully integrated with the entire campus and that sub-communities exist as niches for specific groups of students. Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) advocate for new theories and methods of retaining students of color. These researchers describe student-initiated retention projects (SIRP) which are student organizations focusing on increasing the retention and academic success of students, particularly students of color. Based on the Maldonado study of SIRPs and their work with other such organizations, they proposed a new retention conceptual framework. This framework emphasizes three components: "developing knowledge, skills and social networks;

building community ties and commitments; and challenging social and institutional norms” (p. 607). Maldonado connects these three processes to the concepts of cultural capital, social capital, collectivism and social praxis.

Using Bourdieu’s (1990) definition of cultural capital as the understandings and skills that students bring with them from their cultural communities, Maldonado and his colleagues point out that certain students are at an advantage when they arrive on a college campus. Those who find their cultural knowledge and norms to be aligned with those of the college have the advantage while other students are at a disadvantage if their cultural capital is not as congruent. Social capital, defined in the Maldonado study as benefits derived from one’s social connections and networks, may be more difficult to develop for students of color, especially at predominantly white institutions. Students may overcome this barrier with the assistance of supportive faculty and peers.

Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) assert that “issues related to collective identity and collective struggle are important to examine” (p. 611). Some of these issues relate to being culturally alienated in a “racialized culture” (p. 611). This research includes the assertion that cultural marginalization must be challenged and overturned on college campuses as students of color resist integration and value their cultural identities and their ethnic communities.

While there has not been research on the importance of ethnic students organizations at community colleges, a qualitative study on the experiences of ethnic minority students in predominately white high schools (Datnow and Cooper, 1997),

found that African American students reported having difficulty acclimating to the school environment. They initially had “feelings of alienation, a lack of belonging, and difficulty fitting in” (p.62). Their interactions with other African American peer networks (formal and informal) reduced some of these feelings and helped them to succeed academically. Ethnic student organizations seemed particularly important for facilitating the process of affirming the students’ racial identities. The findings from this study of African American students supports the importance of ethnic student organizations to create the enclave or affinity group described by Kuh and Love (2000).

Based on the work of Friere (1970), SIRPs advocate social praxis, becoming agents of social change. As students learn to focus on their own agency and ability to shape the institution’s environment, they can experience a type of self-empowerment which is important for student retention. This goal of self-empowerment may be crucial for students of color in order to overcome feelings of alienation and to gain a greater sense of collective identity.

Gibson and Bejinez (2009) describe a program of empowerment that they studied. They conducted research on the academic success of Mexican migrant high school students in a Migrant Education Program. The program is designed to

facilitate student engagement by creating caring relationships with students, providing them with access to institutional support, and implementing activities that build from and serve to validate students’ home cultures. Together these foster a sense of belonging and community that lead students to persist in school despite the many obstacles they face. (p. 155)

Staff members in this program often have similar backgrounds to their students and the staff members function as “institutional agents, mentors and advocates” (p.167) for the students. When the migrant students served by this program were compared to a similar group of Mexican-descent students who were not in the program, the migrant students had better persistence rates.

Social Capital

One of the functions of the staff members in the Migrant Education Program was to serve as sources of social capital for the students. The term social capital has become familiar to most people in the social science field over the last few decades. Among the many perspectives and definitions in the research literature, Lin (1999) argues for a solid understanding of social capital as an asset that is “captured from embedded resources in social networks.” (p. 28). Lin traces the idea of capital back to the Marxist conception of return on investment. He also differentiates between two other related terms: human capital and cultural capital. Human capital is the value of individual efforts to develop skills, abilities and knowledge in order to increase earning power in the labor market. Cultural capital theory, as described by Bourdieu (1990), posits that the dominant class in a society invests in the process of reproducing their values and meanings through schooling and other cultural institutions so that they can retain their position of power. Members of the oppressed classes are indoctrinated so that they will internalize this value system which keeps them from gaining the cultural capital necessary to have the privileges of the upper class. Cultural capital is generally passed down through the generations of the dominant group, but members of

the dominated class can gain cultural capital if they assimilate into the dominant culture (Lin, 1999).

Lin acknowledges that human capital and cultural capital are new forms of capital that allow for social mobility from lower to upper classes. He also includes social capital as this type of valuable resource and defines it simply as “investment in social relations with expected returns” (p. 30). In explaining how social capital works, Lin gives four ways that the embedded resources can add value to individual or group actions: 1) facilitates flow of information; 2) social ties can influence decision makers; 3) social ties certify the individual’s credentials; and 4) social relationships reinforce identity and recognize the worthiness of the individual.

As the research on social capital has developed, the definition has been expanded, according to Lin. The expanded definition is: “resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions” (p. 35). This definition has three important aspects: embeddedness, accessibility and use. Lin points out that the accessibility and use of social resources can lead to higher socioeconomic status.

According to Dika and Singh (2002), social capital is positively related to educational achievement. Their critical review of the literature on social capital reveals that most of the studies done before 2002 used the normative definition of social capital which links family resources to academic achievement. Dika and Singh advocate for conducting research which focuses on social capital as access to institutional resources.

Stanton-Salazar (2004) delineates the differences between the normative definition of social capital and what he calls a “critical network-analytic approach” (p. 29). The latter takes into account the sociopolitical realities which include the fact that resources are distributed unequally in societies and that the social structure of any community impacts the access that individuals have to valued resources. His definition of social capital is “a storehouse of different types of resources, embedded in social relations that can be mobilized when an individual or group wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposeful action” (p. 25). He lists the three interrelated aspects of this type of social capital in order to focus on the critical network-analytic approach:

1. [H]ighlights forms of “institutional support” that are not easily accessible throughout society.
2. Those privileged by class, race, and gender use such “support” to secure and reproduce their position in the stratified social order.
3. [H]ighlights the common practice of discrimination and exclusion (Portes & Landolt, 1996)—a particular relation between those who have *power*, *capital* and *privilege* and those who don’t.
(p. 29)

Stanton-Salazar’s definition and description of the important aspects of this type of social capital are in line with the critical theory which is a framework for this study.

Institutional Agents

One source of social capital for students is having interaction with faculty members. While there is a substantial body of research supporting the positive effects on persistence when students have informal interaction with faculty (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977), there are certain types of

faculty interaction which seem to be most helpful to students of color. Interactions with institutional agents who encourage students of color to become more self-empowered are described by Stanton-Salazar (2010) as critical to retaining these students. These agents are people who have positions of high-status and authority and can provide social capital. Stanton-Salazar expands on Lin's definition of social capital to be more specific to student-faculty interactions. Stanton-Salazar views social capital as: "resources and key forms of social support embedded in one's network or associations, and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents" (p. 2). Students of color have to negotiate multiple sociocultural worlds as they move from home communities to college. This requires them to adapt with a variety of social identities, values and belief systems, and ways of using language. The more incongruence there is between home community and college culture, the more students may need assistance from institutional agents. These agents function as mentors and guides through the new campus culture, particularly for students whose parents did not attend college. More specifically, Stanton-Salazar (2010) expands the definition of institutional agent to emphasize the role of access to power.

[H]e or she acts to directly transmit, or negotiate the transmission of, highly valued institutional support, ...in terms of those resources, opportunities, privileges and services which are highly valued, yet differentially allocated within any organization or society that is invested in social inequality and in hierarchical forms of control and organization. (p. 10-11)

This access to institutional support is rare for youth from working-class and ethnic minority communities, according to Stanton-Salazar (2010). When students from these communities have institutional agents in their social and academic networks, they can benefit from the social and cultural capital available in the networks to help them succeed academically.

Stanton-Salazar, Vásquez and Mehan (2001) give examples of programs that use institutional agents in educational settings with ethnic minority students. For elementary students (La Clase Magica) and for high school students (de-tracking students and providing AVID support), institutional agents are used to provide social capital and connections to important resources. These researchers recommend including social support and mentors into future school reform efforts as well as taking a bicultural approach which includes valuing and including students' home culture in the curriculum, pedagogy and school structure.

Cultural Persistence Model

In considering what school reform efforts can make a difference for ethnic minority students, it is helpful to address the concerns raised by Tierney (1992) about Tinto's integration model. Tierney differs with Tinto on his assertion that students must be socially and academically integrated into the college to increase the likelihood of persistence. For students of color, that integration process can cause considerable acculturative stress and make it less likely that they will persist. Tierney recommends the development of new persistence frameworks that will promote emancipation and empowerment for students of color.

Many researchers (Kraemer, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Quintana, Vogel & Ybarra, 1991; Rodriguez, et al., 2000; Smedley, Myers & Harrell, 1993) have recommended further studies on Tinto's model using culturally sensitive operational definitions for the variables. Particularly, the academic and social integration variables have not been well validated for students of color using traditional operational definitions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Newer theories such as those generated by Maldonado, et al. (2005) and Stanton-Salazar (2010) offer possibilities for re-definition of the institutional experiences which contribute to academic and social integration. Museus (2008) studied Black and Asian American student organizations and found that these subcultures of the college "provided a vehicle for minority students to express their identity and advocate for their ethnic minority communities via advocating for institutional change and spreading cultural awareness" (p. 581).

Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) had a vision for alternative models based on a student-led emancipatory process.

[W]hat we are suggesting through our analysis of student-initiated retention efforts is not that Black, Latino, Asian, or American Indian student identities should be eroded as part of an effort to assimilate to a particular university's cultural norms; instead, the dominant culture against which so many students of color are forced to define themselves must be challenged and overturned by students of color acting upon their own convictions and emancipatory interests. (p. 612)

Table 3 shows a comparison between the Integration Model and the SIRP Model. The categories of Pre-entry Attributes and Institutional Experiences are from Tinto's Model (see Figure 1). I have added the Goals category to point out that each model has a different theoretical assumption about what increases persistence.

Table 3. Comparison of Integration and SIRP Models

Integration Model	Student-Initiated Retention Project
Pre-entry Attributes	
Family Background Skills and Abilities Prior Schooling	Social and Cultural Capital
Institutional Experiences	
<u>Academic</u> Academic performance Faculty and staff interactions <u>Social</u> Extracurricular activities Peer group interactions	<u>Academic</u> Social and cultural capital building <u>Social</u> Collective ethnic identity development Social activism
Goals	
Academic and Social Integration	Student Change Agents

Using the SIRP model to conceptualize what is necessary to increase the persistence of students of color, this study used qualitative data from interviews and

quantitative measurement from surveys to determine the roles that institutional agents and ethnic student organizations play in the persistence of Latino students.

Institutional agents could be sources of social and cultural capital. Certain student organizations could help develop a collective ethnic identity and encourage social activism. Figure 2 shows the specific data points for the study.

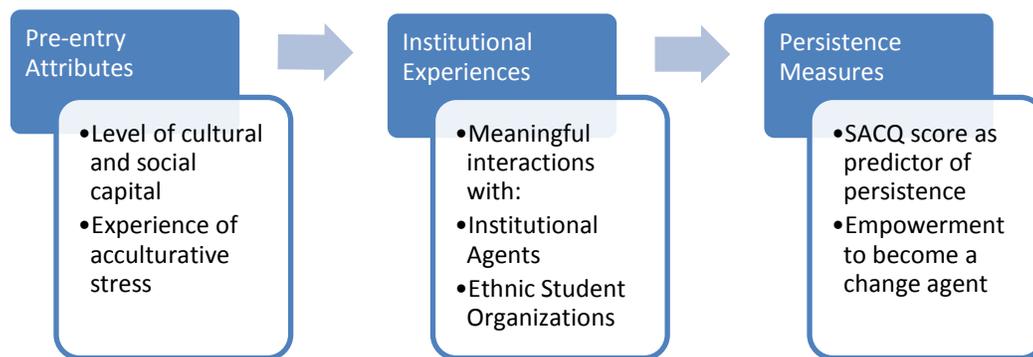


Figure 2. Data points for current study

Research Questions

Using the SIRP model, the research questions addressed in this study are:

1. For Latino students attending community colleges, what role do institutional agents and student organizations play in persistence?
 - a. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect acculturative stress?
 - b. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect empowerment/social activism?

- c. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect the development of social and/or cultural capital?
2. How do students perceive what happens when they interact with institutional agents and/or student organizations?

Specifically, I was interested in the relationships among the variables of student persistence, engagement with institutional agents and student organizations, and acculturative stress. Students come into college with varying levels of social and cultural capital and acculturative stress. They have varying levels of engagement with institutional agents and students organizations. As a result of the variety of pre-entry attributes and institutional experiences, I was expecting that there would be evidence of differing levels of persistence and empowerment shown in the surveys and interviews.

Significance of Study

As the student population of colleges and universities has been changing and now includes more underrepresented students, some traditional models of student persistence have been questioned as to whether they are applicable to a more diverse student population. In particular, Tinto's (1993) model has been criticized even though he has acknowledged that there may be different issues to address for ethnic minority students. Some of the critiques are based on his definitions of academic and social integration and in fact, the concept of integration.

Most models of persistence/student departure conceptualize institutions and students as homogeneous and static entities. In fact, institutions are complex networks of people and sub-organizations. Some of the people in college institutions are actively involved empowering what Stanton-Salazar calls “low-status” students (working class minority students) to succeed within the institution. Some of the sub-organizations are also functioning as social networks to increase the social and cultural capital of the students with whom their members interact.

Students are also more complex than they are represented to be in the traditional persistence models. Particularly, students have multi-faceted social identities (Tajfel, 1974), which includes ethnic identity. A student’s ethnic identity can be flexible, depending on the environment (Ethier & Deaux, 1994), but for students of color, this flexibility may lead to experiencing acculturative stress as they negotiate multiple sociocultural settings.

For students with high levels of acculturative stress, IAs and SOs may help these students find the communities on campus where their stress can be reduced. The IAs and SOs on a community college campus may serve some of the purposes met by Student-Initiated Retention Projects (SIRP) at four-year institutions. If the critical theory concept of empowerment may be a contributor to the persistence of ethnic minority students, as Maldonado, et al. (2005) propose, it is important that this concept be used in a new theory of student persistence. If an empowerment model has promise for students at community colleges, it should be explored as an alternative to the current models. The goals of this study were to explore these issues from students’

perspectives in addition to making comparisons between results of the traditional SACQ and the SIRP model based on student empowerment. This study explored these issues for the population of Latino students at a community college.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In order to address the need for new ways of evaluating student persistence, this study used integrationist and empowerment definitions of persistence in a mixed method design. Students completed surveys based on traditional definitions of persistence and interviews were structured to assess empowerment. The interviews focused on the students' social and cultural capital, sense of collective identity, and involvement in social activism.

This study was conducted on a community college campus by recruiting 45 Latino students to take three assessments of the following factors: likelihood to persist, acculturative stress and interaction with institutional agents and student organizations. The second part of the study involved interviews of eight students (chosen from the 45 survey participants) who responded to questions about their commitment to college, the acculturative stress they have experienced, and their interactions with institutional agents and student organizations.

Setting

This study was conducted at a large (30,000 students) California community college in San Diego County which shares a border with Mexico. This college is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) based on having more than 25% of the student population self-identify as Hispanic. Fifty percent of the student population self-identifies as white, 30% as Hispanic, 6% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% as Black, 3% as Filipino, 1% as American Indian, 3% as more than one ethnicity, and 4% is

unknown. There is an even split between males and females with 50% of the students in each of these categories. Most students (61%) are between 18 and 24 years old. The majority (66%) of students taking classes for academic credit attend part-time. (Palomar College, 2009).

The importance of the setting being at a HSI is related to the research questions this study addresses. Being on a campus where there are many Latino students can be an important factor in the amount and types of acculturative stress that Latino students experience. Also, there is a greater likelihood that there will be more student organizations which support Latino students on an HSI campus. Since the student body is only 50% white, there is a diverse campus community.

This campus is typical of most community colleges in that most of the students attend part-time. Since students are often only on campus for classes and then leave, it is difficult to get students to participate in student organizations or even to spend time with other students or faculty members outside of class. The faculty members who act as institutional agents have to make an effort to reach these part-time students who may be on campus for short periods of time each day.

Participants

Participants were recruited from the student population through classroom announcements about the opportunity to participate in a research study. Of the approximately 9,000 Latino students at the college, 130 were recruited based on their indication of interest in participating. Forty-five of those who were interested participated in the interviews.

The classrooms chosen for recruitment were a convenience sample. I contacted colleagues who were willing to let me come into their classes to administer the recruitment survey. (See Appendix A). The thirty classes were in a variety of disciplines in the social and natural sciences.

In order to qualify for the study, a student had to have been attending the college for at least one semester prior to the current one, identified as being of Hispanic descent, was at least 18 years of age, and was willing to complete the surveys required for the study. Students who qualified and indicated an interest in participating were contacted to set up a time to complete the surveys. Students completed the surveys in a conference room on campus with the researcher present. In some cases, more than one student completed the surveys at the same time.

Informed Consent

Students who participated in completing the surveys were given a copy of the Informed Consent for Surveys form (see Appendix B) to read before they began filling out the surveys. After reading the form, they gave verbal consent to participate in the survey. Students who participated in the interviews were given a copy of the Informed Consent for Interviews form (see Appendix C) and a copy of the Audiotape Recording Release Form (see Appendix D) to read. After reading both forms, the student gave verbal consent to participate in the interviews.

Data Collection

Students were contacted by phone and email to schedule a time to meet with me to fill out the surveys. The surveys were completed on campus in a conference

room while I was present. In some instances, there was more than one student completing the surveys at the same time. After completing the surveys, the students were asked if they would like to participate in the interview portion of the research. They were informed that only some students will be contacted for the interviews but if they were interested, they should note that on the form attached to the surveys. They were told that students who participated in the interviews would receive a \$25 gift card.

Survey Instruments

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) is a 67-item instrument with four subscales which align with Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure (academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment to college and the institution). Respondents indicate how much each item applies to them using a nine-point Likert scale. Krotseng (1992) found in two studies of incoming freshmen and transfer students that the SACQ distinguished between persisters and non-persisters with 79-85% accuracy. It is used widely in research on college student adjustment (Friendlander, et al., 2007), and it takes about 20 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

The SACQ was used in this study as a way to predict the likelihood that a student will persist in college. Scores that were at least one standard deviation above the mean on this questionnaire were used to indicate high likelihood to persist and those at least one standard deviation below the mean were used to indicate low likelihood to persist.

The second questionnaire is the 24-item Societal, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE; Mena, et al., 1987). This instrument assesses the extent to which respondents report stressful experiences associated with the acculturative process. Items are rated for degree of stress using a value between one and four. This scale establishes that participants are experiencing a certain level of stress related to being an ethnic minority. In this study, the research questions are focused on how Latino students persist in college where they may be experiencing acculturative stress in addition to the stress that all students face. This scores that students receive on this survey gives evidence to show that they do experience this type of stress.

The third instrument, created for this study, (see Appendix E) is a measurement of participants' engagement with institutional agents (IA) and/or student organizations (SO). Students were given definitions and examples of each of these concepts and asked how often they have interacted with these types of people or groups at the college. The seven-point Likert scale responses were anchored with the words "never" for one and "always" for seven. The questions were:

1. I have experienced interactions with faculty or staff at [the college] who have encouraged me by providing resources, opportunities, privileges and/or services that contributed to my staying in college.
2. I have participated in an ethnic student organization at [the college] (for example, MEChA, Encuentros, Ballet Folklórico, etc.) which has included meaningful interactions with the members.

Interviews

A sample of eight students was selected from the 45 who took the surveys based on their scores on the SACQ and the engagement survey. Two students from each category (high and low engagement; high and low in SACQ categories) were chosen to be interviewed. Gender was not a consideration for inclusion in the sample, but the sample ended up evenly divided between males and females. Table 4 shows the selection criteria.

Table 4. Interview Selection Criteria

		SACQ Score	
		High	Low
Engagement Score	High	2	2
	Low	2	2

The mean and standard deviation for each survey total was calculated using SPSS. The parameters for the interview categories were set to reflect scores that were at least one standard deviation above or below the mean for SACQ and the engagement questionnaire. The SAFE scores were used to establish that the participants did experience acculturative stress.

The interview questions (see Table 5) were designed to elicit information about the students' experiences with IAs and SOs. There were general introductory questions to set the context for the interactions and then more specific questions on the

empowerment topics developed by Maldonado and his colleagues (2005) and issues discussed by Stanton-Salazar (2010).

Table 5. Interview Questions

1. Tell me about what it was like for you when you first starting attending [the college]. What was encouraging to you? What was difficult? How did you make friends? Who helped you find out what you needed to know to be successful as a student?
 2. Did you find being on campus comfortable or were there things that made you uncomfortable? Did you feel differently on campus than you did at home or in your neighborhood? How did you deal with any discomfort or unfamiliarity? Were there certain people that helped you?
 3. Since you have been at [the college], have you joined any student groups? If so, what groups have you joined and what made you decide to join? If not, what made you decide not to join?
 4. Since you have been at [the college], how has any faculty or staff member helped you or encouraged you in your role as a student? How has anyone on campus helped you in other ways?
 5. What term do you like to use to describe your racial/ethnic identity? How does being a (Latino or other term) student affect your experiences at [the college]? How much do you interact with other (Latino or other term) students? Do you have a sense of being supported by other (Latino or other term) students? How would you describe the racial climate at [the college]—tense vs. harmonious?
 6. In your experiences on and off campus, how often would you say you have experienced racism or discrimination? How do you usually handle these experiences?
 7. Have you ever been involved in any type of social action (doing something to change a social problem)? If so, when and what have you done? What do you think motivated you to do something? Do you see yourself as a change agent—someone who regularly is involved in social action?
 8. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a student at [the college]?
-

Data Analysis

The statistical program, SPSS, was used to analyze the relationships between acculturative stress, engagement, and predicted persistence, as indicated by responses on the three surveys.

I used an audio recorder for the interviews and had them transcribed by a professional transcription service. I then reviewed each interview for accuracy. All students were given pseudonyms so that student identity was kept confidential. I used HyperResearch to code for indications of relevant empowerment themes: development of cultural and social capital, awareness of collective identity and struggle, and evidence of the student becoming a change agent for social justice (Maldonado et al., 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Each student was categorized into either high or low levels of empowerment and on levels of engagement based on the coding results.

The work of Maldonado, et al. (2005) and Stanton-Salazar (2010) would lead to predicting that higher levels of empowerment would be related to higher levels of engagement. Students' empowerment levels were compared to their SAFE scores, SACQ scores, and their level of engagement. The hypothesis was that students who have had more interactions with IAs and SOs will have lower acculturative stress, more of a sense of empowerment, be more involved in social justice activism, and will more often have scores on the SACQ that predict persistence.

To answer the second research question, the interviews were coded to indicate student perceptions of the interactions they had with IAs and SOs. I was particularly interested in their meaning making about being successful in college with or without the support of faculty and other students.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. It was conducted on one community college campus with a substantial number of Latino students. The generalizability of the findings to other campuses, especially to those with fewer Latino students, may not be feasible.

The small sample of 45 students may not be representative of the population of Latino students at the college or at other colleges. This small sample size also could affect how much we can generalize the findings.

The SACQ scores are predictors of persistence, but obviously they are not 100% accurate. Some students who are predicted to persist may not while others who are not predicted to persist may actually do so. The SACQ was designed for use in a clinical setting and the use of the scores for research purposes can be questioned. Construct validity research has been conducted on the SACQ (Feldt, Graham & Dew, 2011; Taylor & Pastor, 2007) and the findings indicate that there should be some revision to the instrument to more precisely identify the factors that contribute to student persistence. Nonetheless, Krotseng's (1992) findings that the SACQ can be used to predict which students will leave college with 79-85% accuracy gives support to the use of the instrument. While Krotseng found the accuracy of the instrument to be greater for students in their first semester, this study does not account for that as a factor in the data analysis.

FINDINGS

The current theories of what contributes to college student persistence are based on research on the experiences and needs of traditional college students. Typically, these students are white, middle-class, full-time students at four-year universities. Recently, some researchers and practitioners involved in student retention work have challenged these traditional understandings. In particular, there has been a discussion of the need to include culturally relevant measures of engagement and persistence. This study attempts to take a broader notion of “student” in order to understand persistence.

Acculturative Stress

One culturally relevant factor is the experience of acculturative stress. While acculturative stress has been shown to affect ethnic minority students’ well-being (Crockett , et al., 2007), the concept of acculturative stress has not been previously studied as a factor in college students’ persistence. Therefore, the first measure in this study was the Societal, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE). In this study, there were three findings related to acculturative stress:

1. Most students’ survey scores indicated they experienced acculturative stress.
2. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between acculturative stress and persistence.
3. The level of acculturative stress experienced by the student predicted likelihood to persist in college.

These findings indicate that acculturative stress is an important factor that should be included in theories or models of student persistence for Latino students.

Almost 85% of the students' SAFE Acculturative Stress scores were within one standard deviation of the mean indicating that all but seven of the 45 students experienced moderate to high levels of acculturative stress. Since there was no statistically significant relationship between acculturative stress and engagement with institutional agents or student organizations, I began to view acculturative stress as a background factor that would be accounted for in the interviews. In fact, during the interviews, most students did describe situations in which they experienced stress related to being Latino in an Anglo culture. The acculturation process related to language use, ethnic identity and cultural practices were often cited by students as sources of stress.

Two students who both scored high in acculturative stress had been raised by single mothers who instilled in them the idea that "hanging out" with other Mexican students would get them in trouble. They were warned against becoming gangsters and encouraged not to dress like them. They both have experienced prejudice and discrimination and have been stressed by those experiences. They perceive this community college as a safe place for Latinos because there is such a large number of Latino students on campus. But they also recognize that most ethnic groups stay to themselves on campus.

Another student with a high acculturative stress score came to the college with what he described as a sense of “shame and embarrassment” related to being Latino. He related that he had used his Spanish name before he entered kindergarten but then it was changed by his teacher to the English version at school. When he got to the college and took a Chicano studies class, he said he developed pride in his Latino heritage and started referring to himself using the Spanish version. Some people questioned him as to why he would do that. As he explained it, for him, it was symbolic of his transformation in perspective about being Latino.

Acculturative stress can be experienced as a result of being forced to acculturate to a new culture or it can also be a result of being discriminated against by people in the culture of origin; in this case, the Latino culture. Two of the students with high acculturative stress reported feeling distressed by other Latino students in regards to their language use. One student felt stressed when other Latino students expected her to speak Spanish although she does not feel competent speaking Spanish. The other student had experienced being ridiculed by other English speaking Latinos for the mistakes she makes in English. Both students tried to avoid interacting with the groups of students who made them feel uncomfortable.

Almost all the students who were interviewed reported having experienced incidents of discrimination or prejudice. One student actually moved to southern California to find a community college that would not have the racial tension that existed on the campus of the school she was attending in another state. Leticia (all names are pseudonyms) explained the stress she felt this way:

You feel like you have to be a certain way all the time or you have to change who you are around certain people, and that's really stressful. You can never be, this is just who I am. So now that there's more people that identify with me, it's easier just to be you, whatever you want to be. I'd rather eat pizza, I don't like beans! People expect you to have all these cliché things about you because you're Hispanic or whatever.

Some of the acculturative stress experienced by the students could be called “minority stress” (Saldaina, 1994). This type of stress is related to acts of discrimination and expressions of prejudice or stereotyping. While acknowledging that they have experienced racism, they also talk about denying it exists because it is too stressful to deal with. As Geraldo said,

I know there's racism and inequality all over but in a sense I almost try to block it because I don't want to see it. But it's out there, you know. I'd probably just try to block it because I really don't want to deal with it. I'd just try to not even look at it that way. I'd just try to change the subject.

Even a student who scored low on acculturative stress, acknowledged blocking out its effects. Tula said, “I know there is racism out there but I feel like if you do not see it or have it in your life, it kind of feels like it does not exist.” What this student seems to be saying is that she is not expecting to experience racism and is having difficulty seeing it when it does happen.

Other students seemed more aware of the ways that racial stereotyping affect them and had stronger responses to it. When asked about how he handles prejudice, John said he would say to the person, “That's your problem, not mine. You're the one that's gonna go through being upset because you have so much hatred against me. You don't even know me. I'm just... You know what? Have a good day.” This student's

voice was quite emotion-filled as he said these words. I felt that the stress of facing prejudice was very real for him.

Another student, Maria, who is of mixed ethnic heritage said she is perceived by most people to be white. She explains the stress that this causes when she is around people who are saying negative things about Mexicans.

[S]o when I came here on this campus, it was kind of a shock and I've overheard conversations about racial things and I'm shocked that people would say some of the things I have heard and that people will say things to me because they think that I'm white, so they'll go ahead and make comments about immigrants or this group of people, that group of people because they think that, she's white it doesn't matter.

Only two students who were interviewed scored low on acculturative stress. They had different perspectives about racism and discrimination. One of them had been in the Marines and had adopted the belief that "...it's not about being black, brown, white. It's about being green. You're just darker green or lighter green." His training to put his identity as a Marine above his ethnic identity is still relevant to him now even after his discharge. He seemed to be struggling with another kind of acculturative stress as he was re-integrating into civilian life and dealing with the prejudices he had developed against Muslim people while he was in the Marines.

The other student who scored low on acculturative stress was taught by her family to value both the Mexican and American cultures and to develop her own value system by "keeping what works" from both of them. She reported that most of her friends were Latino, but she insisted that she is open to friendships with people of all colors. Perhaps, she does not experience as much stress from the acculturation process

because she has been given protective ways of dealing with the stress by her family. She claims to highly value her Latino heritage and sees being brown as beautiful. When facing racism, she said that she sees it as an opportunity to educate the person who is prejudiced.

The relationship between the SACQ Total scores and the SAFE scores (shown in Table 6) reveal that persistence and acculturative stress have a negative correlation. The subscale scores of the SACQ which also show a negative correlation with the SAFE scores are the Personal and Emotional Adjustment scale and the Attachment to College scale. This finding indicates that acculturative stress affects students most significantly in these two aspects of persistence.

Table 6. Correlations of Key Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 SAFE	1								
2 IA	.10	1							
3 SO	.04	.17	1						
4 Engagement (IA + SO)	.09	.68**	.84**	1					
5 SACQ Total	-.36*	.15	.06	.13	1				
6 Academic Adjustment ^a	-.15	.15	.03	.11	.86	1			
7 Social Adjustment ^a	-.26	.22	.29	.34*	.76	.57	1		
8 Personal and Emotional Adjustment ^a	-.34*	.03	-.20	-.13	.70	.48	.45	1	
9 Attachment to College ^a	-.31*	.04	.07	.07	.73	.58	.69	.36	1

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ^a = subscale of SACQ Total

The finding that persistence can be predicted by acculturative stress score (the higher the acculturative stress score, the lower the persistence score), supports previous research on the impact of acculturative stress on psychological well-being (Crockett, et al., 2007). This finding more specifically addresses that it is not only important as a health issue, but also as an educational issue. Students' psychological well-being is a factor in their persistence in college. If a student is distressed by feeling like he does not belong on campus, if he feels conflicted about how his cultural values are regarded, or if he is experiencing racism, he is much more likely to leave college.

Engagement

Engagement has been included in traditional models of college persistence in the general terms of academic and social integration (Tinto, 1975, 1993) or involvement (Astin, 1984). For this study, engagement has been operationalized as having meaningful interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations. The findings in this study related to engagement show a complex relationship between students' level of engagement and persistence.

1. Analysis of survey data reveals no statistically significant relationship between engagement and persistence (see Table 6).
2. When the sample is disaggregated by immigration status and native language, engagement with institutional agents does predict persistence for immigrant, Spanish-speaking students.

3. Interview data indicate that engagement with culturally supportive institutional agents and student organizations can contribute to empowerment for students.

The first finding indicates that frequency of engagement with institutional agents and student organizations does not seem to be related to persistence as measured by the SACQ for this sample. The surveys measured frequency of contact which was not significant, but the interviews revealed that certain types of contact did have meaning for the students. Specifically, the students who were interviewed described interactions with institutional agents and student organizations that supported the students' growth in their understanding and valuing of their cultural heritage as being important to their sense of belonging and empowerment to become social change agents.

While the prediction that engagement with institutional agents and student organizations would moderate the effects of acculturative stress on persistence was not supported for all students in the sample, there was a subgroup for which engagement did predict persistence. For the immigrant, Spanish-speaking students ($n=11$), frequency of engagement with institutional agents was predictive of persistence (SACQ) score. This group of students had a lower mean score (3.18 on a scale of 7) for engagement with institutional agents than the whole sample (4.27), but the score for the subgroup was within one standard deviation from the score for the whole sample.

For this study, persistence was operationalized by using the scores that students received on the SACQ survey. One of the innovations of this study of persistence was to also include a culturally relevant measure of persistence with which to evaluate the effects engagement with institutional agents and student organizations. Using the Student-Initiated Retention Project (SIRP; developed by Maldonado, et al., 2005) as a model, student empowerment was the culturally relevant measurement proposed in this model for this study (see Table 3). SIRP has three factors which contribute to student empowerment for ethnic minority students: development of social and cultural capital, increasing awareness of collective ethnic identity, and social activism to promote equality. The student interviews were analyzed to see how often these three factors were found in the students' responses. The presence of these factors was used as evidence of empowerment themes in the experiences of the students.

In the analysis of the interview data, I focused on how students made sense of their engagement with institutional agents and student organizations. Did this type of engagement make a difference for them in terms of their ability to negotiate the college culture (social capital), their comfort being a Latino student at the community college (respect for Latino culture/identity), and their perspective on becoming a social change agent? Since the students who were interviewed represented a range of engagement experiences, the analysis of their interviews, not surprisingly, showed varied and complicated meaning-making.

The four interviewed students with low frequency of engagement only engaged with institutional agents, and not student organizations. While all four of them indicated that they were aware of the benefits of belonging to a student organization, they did not see it as a priority. One student did plan to join the Child Development club to promote her career goals. In their engagement with institutional agents, two students interacted with a teacher in a Chicano Studies class. Both students found this class to be personally relevant. Ricardo found relevance in learning about past injustice.

I got into my Chicano class because I was like, OK, I know my 16th century to 19th century [history], but what about Mexico? What's been going on there? So I took my Chicano studies and now I'm like, whoa, this stuff happened and it definitely stirs up feelings like, OK, this is injustice that doesn't have to be overlooked. Like when you see people digging up historical records and forgiving people because of certain wrongs, it's like, OK, fair is fair.

John, by contrast, was interested in learning about his roots.

[M]e being a Chicano, I didn't even know maybe 1% of what I've learned so far and that actually makes me more interested about where my roots come from and what we've gone through to fight just to be where we are right now.

Both students had SACQ scores that indicated low persistence and expressed a sense of alienation from school in their interviews. John expresses his feelings about school by comparing it how he felt when he was in high school and involved in sports.

Coming into college, I don't play sports. I don't do anything whatsoever, so I don't feel anything that's motivating me to continue. I do what I can, but I don't feel that same willing on my own like 'I gotta do it. I gotta do it'. Now it feels like it's a bother that I have to do it 'cause I don't really feel like I'm striving for anything.

For students who come into college with a lack of motivation towards academic achievement, do not join student clubs, and do not interact with faculty outside the classroom, ethnic studies classes may be the place they develop a sense of personal relevance and connection to the college curriculum. Two of the teachers in the Chicano Studies classes at the college are also MEChA advisors and function as institutional agents in their classes. These faculty members reach out to students by keeping an open door policy beyond the required office hours. Students come to them for advice and support. The students look up to them because they know that these teachers were once struggling with the same issues that the students now face. Knowing that it is possible to be Latino and be a successful professor instills hope in the students. Students are looking for inspiration both in and out of the classroom. John talked about how the teacher makes a difference in his motivation.

[I]t's not really so much where I wake up, I look forward every morning to waking up and wanting to go to school. I go to school. I feel like it's a routine that I'm forced to do even though I'm really not. Like there are those classes where you're like "Oh my gosh, is it over yet?" and then there's those classes like "Oh, I'm looking forward to this class. What are we gonna learn today because this teacher's so inspirational." He or she can make the topic really interesting and really catchy.

Most college students probably would agree with this student about the importance of the teacher's role in motivating students. However, the relevance for Latino students may be even greater if they do not have other places where they interact with Latino faculty members and students. The more they can talk about the cultural capital they bring with them to college, such as the value of their cultural

traditions and practices, the history of their people, their ways of knowing, and their language, the more they will feel a sense of belonging and the less they will experience acculturative stress. The Chicano Studies classes seemed to provide a place for this valuing to occur and for the students to gain an understanding of the collective struggles of Latino people.

The four students who were highly engaged with institutional agents and student organizations belonged to a variety of types of organizations: Architecture Club, TRIO (academic support program for first generation college students), Associated Student Government (ASG), and MEChA (Chicano Student Movement). Each student gave different reasons for joining the organization, and each student found different meaning in her or his participation. One student joined the Architecture Club to promote his career plans and found it to be a place where he could enhance his self-esteem and learn leadership skills. The student who joined TRIO felt comfortable in the mostly Latino group where she got special academic help from tutors and counselors. She saw it as a good opportunity to make friends with similar goals and keep focused on her school work. The student who participated in the ASG joined as an extension of her interest in political science and sees it as a means to learn more about the political process and be involved on campus. The student who belonged to MEChA joined because her brother recommended it, and she found it to be a second family for her and a place of empowerment.

It became evident to me from the analysis of these interviews that engagement with student organizations did not have a simple relationship to persistence. It was not

just whether a student belonged to an organization or even how often the student participated in the meetings, but the goals of the organization were what mattered. The students who had high engagement and high persistence were the students who belonged to ASG and the MEChA. Both of these organizations focus on student empowerment, although in different ways. In looking for the markers of empowerment from the SIRP work (Maldonado, et al., 2005), it seemed that it was only MEChA that gave students the support for becoming change agents. The students who had high engagement but low persistence scores were in organizations with narrowly focused goals of career development or academic support. While both of these goals are helpful for students, neither of them alone contributes to student empowerment as outlined in SIRP and described in the next section.

Empowerment

The three factors of empowerment from Maldonado's study on Student-Initiated Retention Project, were keys to analyzing the interviews for the following signs of empowerment:

1. Increase in social and/or cultural capital – acquiring valuable resources and knowledge about college culture through relationship networks; developing appreciation of the wealth of resources and knowledge in the Latino culture
2. Development of collective ethnic identity – realizing that the struggle for equality and justice for Latino people is their struggle; seeing their success as being dependent on a collective effort of Latino people

3. Involvement in social activism for the purpose of social change (justice/equity) – behavior and attitudes consistent with becoming a social activist

The findings show that empowerment varies based on the type of engagement in which the student participated. The three sources of empowerment were engagement with institutional agents, student organizations and Chicano Studies classes. Students may have had one or more of these types of engagement. I will report the findings based on the type of engagement.

Chicano Studies Classes

The four students who participated in Chicano Studies Classes showed signs of empowerment in how they talked about two factors: increase in social and cultural capital, and development of collective ethnic identity. Particularly for students who did not seem to bring as much social and cultural capital to college, these classes appeared to be meaningful. They learned more about their cultural heritage and the important historical contributions of Mexicans. One of the Chicano Studies teachers brings in campus resources, such as counselors and student organization representatives, to the classes and this activity likely increases students social capital as they learn how to access the resources.

Even one student who had a high level of cultural capital coming into college described her Chicano Studies class as a valuable experience. "I know my culture. I know the positives...it is so much easier so that like nobody can really break you down and that is encouraging." She also expressed the opinion that there has to be a

place in the educational system where the Mexican culture is taught as a source of pride. “Nobody teaches your Mexican culture and like oh, there are other brown people out there who actually did something. Like we contribute so much and it’s almost like you need to show it off, you know.”

This same student envisions taking what she learned in Chicano Studies classes and bringing the message to the preschoolers she plans to teach in the future. Tula talks about being like the Chicano Studies professors for her students.

[N]ow I've been empowered and I see a lot of people being empowered about their culture and who they are when they're 18, 20, but I think it needs to happen when you are two and four and ... I would love to be [names of professors] for like four-year-olds... And it is almost too late and I mean, everybody is like, oh, what happened? Why are they 50% drop out and 50% in jail? It is like well, 'cause they did not have anybody when they were four, five, six, seven. Now, we're trying to pick up the pieces.

Student Organizations

The two students who participated in student organizations that were focused on career or academic support (Architecture Club and TRIO) talked about gaining personal enrichment or academic guidance. Both of these types of development would fit into the category of social capital. The career-oriented club gives members opportunity to develop leadership and network with other students with similar career interests. TRIO provides guidance on navigating the college culture and the support of special counselors and tutors. However, the knowledge gained from these types of student organizations does not contribute to the development of cultural capital or to the other two factors in empowerment (collective ethnic identity and social activism).

One of the students acknowledged that he would have liked to participate in a club like MEChA where he thought he would find more support for his cultural identity, but he never found time to attend. The other student did not express interest in MEChA because she preferred relating to English-speaking Latinos and had a negative view of MEChA. For both of these students, gaining a sense of empowerment was not a personal goal.

Maria, who participated in ASG, also talked about the social capital she gained from being in the student government. She was more aware of events going on in all the student clubs and said she felt more “professional” in her role as a student as a result of being a senator in the ASG. While she spoke of her desire to be involved in political issues, she did not specifically say that her ASG involvement would facilitate her activism in any way. There was no evidence that her membership in ASG contributed to the development of Latino cultural capital or a collective ethnic identity. At the time of the interview, almost all members of the ASG leadership were Latino students but the stated purpose of the ASG does not include developing Latino leaders. The student government is focused on leadership development not cultural support.

In contrast, MEChA’s stated purpose as a student organization includes promoting “higher education, cultura, and historia.” (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán). Tula joined MEChA because her brother told her she should and that she would learn “how to empower yourself”. She also had belonged to the Child Development club but did not find it to be the same kind of experience. She said she saw the Child Development club members as people who participated “just for a line

on their resume” while the MEChA students made the club a priority. She experienced MEChA as a family where she cared about the members as much as she cared about her brother. She believed that students in MEChA were in it to make a difference in the world. Tula talked about how MEChA goes out to the local swap meet and educates people there about their legal rights.

[O]ne thing that I loved to do was MEChA because MEChA was out going to the swap meet which is like the local farmers’ market which is like - every Mexican has like - that was my childhood, going to swap meet. It was your people, your food, perfect. Heaven. With the border checkpoints and just things happening, we go to swap meet and just sit down and talk to like Tia Whatever and the grandma over here and pass out information. And that, to me, is like that area swap meet itself just involves like everybody’s struggle and lack of information.

Tula goes on to explain how she took what she learned in MEChA and made it a part of her own style of activism.

If I have to like answer why I’m in MEChA, it would be because of events like that. I would not be able to do it without them but now I can go with my mom. Me and my mom go and just pass out pamphlets.

This transition from doing social activism with the club to doing it even when the club is not involved is evidence that the value of this type of work has become internalized to the point that it is now motivating the student to be a change agent. Tula does not need the club telling her to take action in situations of injustice. She can be a leader in the struggle for equality because she has transitioned from oppressed victim to social change agent. This transition is based on the development of a collective identity with a group of people who are experiencing inequality. Maldonado and his colleagues (2005), in their study of Student- Initiated Retention Project leaders, proposes that “an

organized community of students of color not only offers a source of personal support but also reinforces the power of a social collective to challenge oppressive norms and practices” (p. 628). Engagement with MEChA advisors and members gave Tula the personal support and understanding of collective power so that she can act to challenge injustice.

When asked about the source of this social activism, her family or MEChA, Tula gave more weight to her family’s influence but credits MEChA too.

I think 100% my family and MEChA has just been able to add onto it. So like 200% then? No, definitely my family. That’s why I was into talking about, you know, my family, my parents, my dad. I have the foundation, for sure, with my family and MEChA has been able to add onto it and show me different things and tools and resources but my family, for sure.

In addition to becoming a social activist, this student also has learned to pass on the message of empowerment. She describes a conversation she had at the swap meet with a woman who was being given pamphlets on her legal rights.

I remember I went to the swap meet and these ladies said,
 “Oh, do I have to pay for this? How do you guys print those out?”
 “Out of our pockets.”
 “Really you guys print all these?”
 “Yeah.”
 “Wow. Well, who pays you back?”
 “Well, if you use it, you’ll be paying me back. If you take advantage of it, that is our gratification.”

This student said that this experience was very meaningful to her and she is motivated to be involved in this type of work now beyond her participation in MEChA.

In evaluating the role of student organizations in the persistence of community college students, the evidence in this study points to the following findings:

1. Engagement in student organizations that are oriented towards personal, academic or career goals, gives students a sense of social connection or academic support. This connection may increase the social or academic integration of the student and increase persistence. There is no evidence that engagement with these types of student organizations increases the factors that contribute to empowerment (cultural capital, collective ethnic identity, or social activism).
2. Engagement in student organizations that are oriented towards ethnic or cultural group support gives students a sense of social connection as well as the factors that contribute to empowerment. This empowerment aspect, as proposed by Maldonado (2005), can be important for ethnic minority students' persistence.

Student organizations vary in their purpose and goals. Engagement with student organizations affects students in different ways. Some ethnic minority students seem to benefit from engagement with ethnically oriented student organizations as a source of empowerment, while others benefit from the social connections that these organizations provide. Another source of empowerment for students is their engagement with institutional agents.

Institutional Agents

Students engaged with institutional agents in their classrooms, during office hours, and in their role as advisors to student organizations. There were two types of engagement. One type was related to career issues, personal issues or academic

support. In this type of interaction, there was evidence of increased social capital in the form of information about how to be more successful in their classes, choosing a career or dealing with stress. Another type of interaction was experienced by students who engaged with the Chicano Studies professors. These students described interactions which were sources of cultural capital, helped to develop collective ethnic identity, and encouraged social activism. These faculty members brought people into the classrooms to tell students about the resources that were available to them on campus, such as counseling and tutoring. They taught them about their cultural heritage and the on-going struggle of their people. The students said they felt empowered by the content of the curriculum, as well as the passion of these teachers.

Two of the Chicano Studies professors also serve as advisors to MEChA. This dual role provided some students with opportunity to engage with these faculty members in several different settings. The students saw the professors in the classroom, during office hours, at the campus meetings, and traveled with them to regional meetings. Office hours were often used to talk with these institutional agents to address personal issues and crises. According to the students, these faculty members serve as role models, parental figures, counselors, and academic advisors. When I asked Tula what she would have done if these faculty members had not been available during her time in college, she expressed her dismay about the thought in a passionate response.

I would make somebody become a [names of MEChA advisors]. I just wouldn't see myself going to college without anybody, any support. If it wasn't for them, specifically male figures, I would force myself on

somebody I think. I would find somebody. I just wouldn't see it. I just can't see myself going around the school and not feeling comfortable.

According to the students, most of whom are first-generation college students, these professors mentor them on how to navigate the college system. Some of the descriptors used for them were nurturing, supporting, caring, patient, listens, encouraging, calming, and understanding. They seem to be a lifeline for the students who depend on them for guidance and support. Because both of these faculty talk about their experiences as first-generation college students, the students seem to trust them to understand how difficult it can be to navigate the college culture. Whether it is helping a student who has been deported to finish up a class or lending money to the student who has no lunch, the students report that these professors help students in ways that most other professors would not.

Role of Acculturation Strategies

While most college demographics depict Latino students as a unitary category, this research seems to show that there are many ways to be Latino. One of the ways in which this difference is shown is within group variation by type of acculturation strategy. According to Berry and Sam (1997), in pluralistic societies, individuals in various cultural groups develop acculturation strategies related to how they will acculturate when interacting with people in other groups. The issues each person must consider are how much maintaining cultural identity and characteristics is valued and how much maintaining relationships with the dominant society is important. Using

these two factors, Berry and Sam (1997) describe four categories of acculturation strategies, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Acculturation Strategies

		Values maintaining cultural identity and characteristics	
		Yes	No
Values maintaining relationships with dominant society	Yes	Integration	Assimilation
	No	Separation	Marginalization

Adapted from: Berry and Sam (1997)

After I analyzed the interview data for this study, I saw evidence that the students were taking different approaches to handling their experiences of being Latino students at an institution within the dominant culture. Their choices of acculturation strategies seemed to relate to the variations in their decisions about whether or not they engaged with institutional agents and student organizations. I saw that three of the four acculturation strategies were being used by the students, but I did not find any evidence of the separation acculturation strategy. This strategy is defined by the desire to maintain original cultural practices and to avoid contact with the dominant culture. People who use this strategy are not likely to be enrolled in a community college where they would be in contact with the college culture which is based on the dominant culture. Any students who use this strategy would unlikely to volunteer to participate in a research study.

As I analyzed the interview data, I found evidence that led me to create a new category of acculturation strategy which was relevant for two of the students who did not fit into any of the other categories. I call this strategy Differentiation based on the

idea that the students were in the process of defining themselves as Latinos by resisting being categorized by others. This resistance helped them differentiate themselves in ways that were specific to their situations.

Marginalization: Low Engagement/Low Persistence

Berry and Sam (1997) defined marginalization as loss of cultural and psychological contact with traditional culture and larger society; alienation, loss of identity, acculturative stress, confusion and anxiety. Marginalized people do not feel connected to either their ethnic culture of origin or the larger American culture.

Two students who were interviewed fit in this category. Both of these men had been raised by single mothers and had been told as they were growing up that they should not hang out with other Hispanic males because they were “gangsters”. These students were socialized to dress in ways that were not connected to gang members (no khaki pants and flannel shirts). They were told this is the “proper” way to dress. One of them, Ricardo, said he took on a “skater” identity as a way to escape the stereotyping he saw around him.

I chose to distance myself in high school because everybody was so susceptible to groups. If you're Mexican, you hung out with all the Mexicans, and I didn't like the clothing they wore. I didn't like the trouble they got into. I really just wanted to escape. So I hung out with the skaters and distanced myself from that.

The other student, John, described a situation where he and his brother witnessed crimes being committed while in an after-school program. The facility was in a Latino neighborhood park which was used by families during the day.

It's a beautiful park until the sun goes down. That's when a lot of the little hoodlums...that's when the creeps come out at night. And me and my little brother would wait there and we would see a lot of things that we never thought we would see.

This student now has a career goal of being an immigration officer. He said that his exposure to the criminal behavior of people in his neighborhood contributes to his desire to enforce the immigration laws. He claimed that he “doesn’t have anything against my own kind,” but some of his comments seemed tinged with contempt for those students who got involved in protests against inequality. As John recollected:

I remember back in 2005 or 2006 when a bunch of Latino and Hispanic students were marching out of class, I stayed in class. I remember...because I went to [name of high school] and that's a big community with Hispanics and a bunch of the students left class because they were doing their little protest outside of class. They were waving some Mexican flags, they had them on their trucks, they were in the parking lot just making a bunch of noise.

When I asked him why he decided not to participate in the protest, he said that his mother would not approve, and that he was afraid her reaction. His negative reaction to being involved in this protest was in contrast to his positive reaction to being in a Chicano Studies class. He said he felt connected with the teacher in that class and was invited to attend MEChA, but did not feel drawn to do that. While he refers to himself as “Chicano”, he said he does not feel the need to get support from being in MEChA. His career goals are what motivates him, but even with having those goals, he admits being somewhat alienated in school. He does not find other students to be friendly, is not connected by being involved in sports like he was in high school, and finds it difficult to connect to the material in some classes. When asked about how being

Chicano affects his experiences in college, he said that he normally just stays to himself so it does not affect him at all.

Both of these “marginalized” students had the highest levels of acculturative stress of all eight students interviewed. Both claim that they do not feel particularly connected to the campus or other students. Their belief that being male and Mexican made you likely to be a gangster led them to break connection to the cultural wealth within their traditional culture. Based on their SACQ scores, they are at-risk for not persisting in college. Their lack of engagement with institutional agents and student organizations could be a contributing factor to their at-risk status.

Integration: High Engagement/High Persistence

According to Berry and Sam (1997), individuals who desire to maintain some degree of cultural integrity while seeking to participate in the larger, multicultural society are choosing the integration strategy. There were two students in this study who could be described as “integrated”. Both said they grew up in families that valued multiculturalism and actively taught their children to be open to other cultures. Maria described her ethnic identity this way:

I will say I am Irish, and I have some Mexican in me. If it's on one of those questionnaires where you can only mark one, usually I'll say Caucasian just because that's what everybody sees me as because that's what I look like. If someone really asks, I'll say I'm Mexican and Irish, and then it's like, "Oh! You're Mexican?" But a lot of the time it's just easier for people to see me as blond, blue-eyed person, they automatically assume that anyways. If someone really asks, I'll tell them the whole spiel.

Tula remembers her dad did not use the word “different” to describe Mexican people, but always told her that brown is beautiful. His advice to her about culture was to keep what works from the Mexican culture and make changes when needed. He wanted her to live freely in the American culture, but to leave the anxiety and stress of that world at the door when she came home. She describes the culture clash that occurs over something as common as drinking coffee.

Like coffee, like in our culture, at least in our family, there is no coffee on the go. Coffee is hot. That means that you need to sit down and enjoy it and enjoy people's company. The fact that you take coffee on the go, . . . you know when you are on the fast track and you are taking your coffee on the go and it's spilling on you and you're hot and people are suing 'cause it's hot. It is not supposed to be on the go. It is supposed to be enjoyable. You eat dinner at your grandma's house and then you grab coffee outside on the porch and enjoy it and let it have time to cool down.

This student values the time orientation and relationship priorities of the Mexican culture while also having a sense of being a part of the American culture. She expressed frustration with hearing Latino students refer to her way of dressing as “white-washed”. Her response is that she lives in America and she dresses like an American. She seems to be able to integrate the two cultures in a way that makes her comfortable at home and at school.

Maria, the Irish-Mexican student, spent her early elementary years in a Spanish immersion program because her father wanted her to have the cultural background that was part of her heritage on her mother's side. She found friendships there with other multi-ethnic students and was able to lessen the feelings of ostracism she experienced because she did not look Latino. She is fluent in Spanish, knows Mexican folk

dances, and has mostly Latino friends. She said that she has valued multiculturalism since she was a child.

Both students were highly involved in student organizations and scored most other students in the study. Their approach to living in a multicultural world seemed to be working for them in a way that promoted their school success and personal adjustment. They valued their Mexican heritage while also wanting to connect with the dominant culture. They seemed to be able to “integrate” these two cultural systems within their own social identity.

Assimilation: Low Engagement/High Persistence

Another acculturation strategy described by Berry and Sam (1997) is assimilation. People who use this strategy seem to be more interested in seeking interaction in the dominant culture than in maintaining their ethnic identity. Based on their interviews, two students could be considered assimilated.

Hector is a recently discharged Marine who is coming to college in order to become a physical therapist and possibly work with recovering Marines. He grew up in a mostly Latino neighborhood and is fluent in Spanish. When asked about his ethnic identity, he reflects back on his time in the Marines and what he learned in the training he received. He was taught to ignore race as a distinguishing factor among his fellow Marines. He also talked about how people change when they are being exposed to people who have different ethnic backgrounds.

I had to live with them, eat with them, train with them, go to war with them. So maybe my mentality has changed because of that. There was people in the military that had never seen a Mexican guy before, people

that had never seen a black guy before. People that still believed that their race was the supreme race, you know? It's funny cause like after a few years their mentality changes. You end up being friends with someone that had never seen a Mexican before.

These experiences were apparently very important to Hector's sense of who he was and what was important to him. He said that he had more pride in his identity as a Marine than in his identity as a Mexican. Part of his motivation for going to college and wanting to be successful was to contradict the negative stereotypes of Mexicans. He said he considered being part of a gang when he was younger, but he did not want to be another statistic. He wanted to make his parents proud. While he has fond memories of his childhood experiences in a close-knit neighborhood, he claimed he does not find that same connection now with people in his multi-ethnic apartment building. He said his best connections on campus are with other veterans and he feels very comfortable on campus because there are quite a few veterans in his classes. While he expressed some interest in going to MEChA meetings, he admitted that he would rather spend the time at home.

Rosa was the only student interviewed who was enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. She was in the highest level of ESL and would be in a mainstream English class in her next semester. She is a Child Development major and she intends to get her certificate in that discipline and then go on to a four-year college. She makes plans to go to the Child Development Club but finds it hard to have the time because she also has a job. Rosa is comfortable in the ESL classes and with other ESL students, but she does not like to speak in front of other Latino

students who are more fluent in English. She says that they laugh at her mistakes when she speaks English. She says she is very comfortable asking teachers for help and remembers a teacher who helped her when she first came to the U. S. in sixth grade.

Both students seem to be focused on their career goals and do not seem to find ethnicity to be an important aspect of their interactions on campus. Even though Rosa has had uncomfortable experiences with other Latino students, she does not see that as related to her ethnicity but as a temporary problem related to her language learning. She believes that moving into non-ESL classes is a passage that validates her as an English-speaking Latino. She does not perceive being treated differently by Anglos because of her ethnicity and, interestingly, is more comfortable with Anglo English speakers than with Latino English speakers. Being a Child Development major and future pre-school teacher are the aspects of her identity in which she expresses pride.

Differentiation: High Engagement/Low Persistence

Table 8 shows the relationships between the engagement and persistence levels of the four groups of students who were chosen to be interviewed for this study and the acculturation strategies which align with each group. Three of the acculturation strategies were relevant to the students in three of the engagement/persistence categories. Differentiation is the term I am using for the students in the category of high engagement but low persistence. These students challenge the concept that engagement is positively correlated with persistence. One factor in explaining why their scores do not support the prediction that engagement leads to persistence may be

that they are responding to acculturative stress in ways that interfere with persistence. While they are engaged, they are also struggling with issues of acculturation and these struggles may keep them from becoming empowered in ways that would promote persistence.

Table 8. Engagement and Persistence Levels with Acculturation Strategy

		SACQ Score	
		High	Low
Engagement Score	High	Integration	<i>Differentiation</i>
	Low	Assimilation	Marginalization

The two students in the Differentiation category seemed to be caught between two cultures in ways that challenged them to define themselves as particular kinds of bicultural people. These students seemed to navigate between cultures with specific goals in mind.

Leticia said that one of her strategies was to avoid interacting with Spanish speaking Mexican-American students. She became adamant about the discomfort she experiences when others expect her to be fluent in Spanish. Even though Spanish was her first language, she said she does not feel competent speaking in Spanish and has been ridiculed for lack of fluency. Partly because of the language issue, she said she identified more with Anglo culture. She described her high school experience from the perspective of being not wholly in one culture. “I didn't have as many friends as say a whole white person does, or like a completely Hispanic person does. So I still

felt like there was an issue there. I still felt like an outsider in high school but not with academics and stuff, I was fine.”

Leticia’s parents are both Latino and she reports that her mother included Mexican cultural practices as part of their home environment. She said that her father wanted her to keep her original culture more than adapting to the American culture. Her mother was more open to both cultures. Leticia said she found her own balance by choosing friends who were Mexican-American English speakers. She felt comfortable with this group of students and was not interested in student organizations oriented towards Chicano pride, such as MEChA. Her perspective on MEChA was that she thought it was racist against white people and that she would be rejected by MEChA members. Her lack of fluency in Spanish and her light skin color made her feel a lack of connection with MEChA students.

The other student, Geraldo, wanted to minimize the stress he feels from his straddling of two worlds. He talked about his home life being stressful because of family conflicts and poverty. He said it is difficult for him to come to school and focus on class work when he is distracted by his home life. He speaks Spanish at home and English at school and says that he is more comfortable speaking English. After taking a Chicano Studies class, Geraldo changed his name from the English pronunciation that had been given to him in elementary school to the Spanish pronunciation that he had always used at home. He talked about how he had been able to overcome feelings of shame about being Latino and now had a sense of pride about his culture. As he saw it, some people did not understand why he would formally

change what he was called, but it was important to him personally. This change seemed to me to be symbolic of an attempt to bring the two worlds together and to reject the assimilation process that had begun when he entered school as a young child.

Geraldo and Leticia both had a high level of engagement with student organizations and institutional agents, but low scores on the SACQ indicating that they may not persist in college. A student with high engagement and low SACQ score contradicts what would be expected from the literature on persistence and engagement (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1993). According to persistence theory, if students are highly engaged, then they should persist. The acculturation strategies used by these students seemed to be based on the goals of defining their ethnic identities and bridging multiple worlds. The stress associated with this acculturation process sometimes is overwhelming (Crockett, et al., 2007). Students who are experiencing high levels of acculturative stress have less ability to focus on academic tasks. Geraldo describes his strategy of dealing with racism within this context.

There's problems going on at home. For example, my family has its problems right now. Also the fact that I'm going to school, the stress alone is just bringing me down. Racism is another big factor but I don't feel like it's affecting me right now, but technically it is. There's only so much you can do.

Leticia talked about her way of dealing with race issues as evolving from the helplessness her parents experienced to a more empowered stance. When asked about how race was addressed by her parents, she explained how things had changed. "They didn't say much. I'm sure they noticed it but I'm sure they felt there was nothing they

could do about it. But now that I'm more aware, I talk about it, they talk about it more. But before, they might have talked about it amongst themselves but never to us.”

These two students’ stories exemplify the complexity of acculturation. Both students were born to parents who immigrated to the United States from Mexico or Central America. Both spoke Spanish as their first language, but feel more comfortable speaking English. Both have experienced prejudiced attitudes from both Latino and Anglo people. One of them, Leticia, speaks of herself as a Mexican-American and is hesitant to accept the Chicano label. The other, Geraldo, now is proud to refer to himself as Chicano after taking a Chicano Studies class. He said he has re-connected to his original cultural heritage but he still wants to be a part of the mainstream culture. Leticia seems to prefer many aspects of the Anglo culture but maintains friendships with other Latino students as long as they speak English. The acculturation strategies employed by Leticia and Geraldo have been influenced by their experiences and, possibly, by the process of their ethnic identity development. In some ways, both of them are pushing back against others’ ideas of what they should be. Geraldo is not Gerald. Leticia is not a Chicana. By being assertive about how they are and are not like other Latinos, they are trying to reach their goals of being authentic and navigating the boundaries between two cultures.

As shown in Table 6, the categories of acculturative strategies are based on two issues: value of maintaining cultural characteristics and identity and value of relationships with the dominant society. From the interviews, it appears that values are dependent on context and rather than having a yes or no answer, the more accurate

response is “It depends”. In the cases of Geraldo and Leticia, it seems to depend on what part of the culture and society they are referencing. For Leticia, language is a defining part of her identity and is influential in her acculturation strategy. For Geraldo, now he has pride in his original culture, but he still faces stresses related to aspects of the culture. These students are in a process of what I am calling Differentiation. As in cellular differentiation, when a simple cell divides and becomes more complex, these students are in a process of adapting to a complex environment where they experience acculturative stress and develop strategies to cope with it.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study describe the relationships between the acculturative stress that Latino community college students experience and their persistence in school; the role that institutional agents and student organizations play in college experience; and how students are empowered in their engagement with institutional agents and student organizations. In this section, I discuss these findings in light of the Student-Initiated Retention Project (SIRP; Maldonado, et al., 2005), and the cultural perspectives proposed by Kuh & Love (2000). I also use the concept of acculturation strategies (Berry & Sam, 1997) to describe the ways that students negotiate their bicultural experiences. And, finally, I propose a new Cultural Empowerment Model for meeting the needs of ethnic minority students.

Student Power

SIRP was created to challenge the accepted theories about student persistence, such as those promoted by Tinto (1993) and Astin (1984). SIRP promotes a model which takes into account the need for ethnic minority students to become empowered in their experiences in higher education. The logic of this model is that by increasing social and cultural capital, developing their collective ethnic identity, and becoming social change agents, ethnic minority students are more likely to persist in college. This challenge to the established persistence theories is based on the idea that ethnic minority students have different needs which must be addressed in order for them to persist and they have the power to create programs that can address these needs. While these programs have been developed at four-year universities, they have not

been a part of community colleges attempts to retain students. The research questions in this study were designed with the idea that students can be empowered as they engage with institutional agents and student organizations at community colleges.

Empowerment at Community Colleges

The findings suggest that some students are empowered by engaging with institutional agents and students organizations. Whether engaging with institutional agents or student organizations, students did increase their social capital related to being successful in college. In the interviews, the students reported that the relationships they developed with faculty members and other students gave them access to information and resources that they did not have before. However, not all types of engagement led to empowerment.

There was evidence in the interviews that Chicano studies classes were another source of cultural capital development. Those students who were enrolled in Chicano Studies classes, participated in MEChA, or engaged with Latino institutional agents increased their cultural capital. Students who did not enroll in Chicano Studies classes or participate in MEChA did not show evidence of developing collective ethnic identities. Only participation in an ethnic oriented club, MEChA, contributed to the development of social activism or the encouragement to become a social change agent.

Cultural Model of Student Persistence

Kuh and Love (2000) propose in their Cultural Propositions about Premature Student Departure (see Table 2) that culture must be a part of the discourse on student persistence. These statements point out the importance of cultures of origin (family,

school, community, etc.) and cultures of immersion (dominant society, American higher education, etc.) distance between cultures of origin and cultures of immersion, and the necessity of sociocultural connections to the academic system. In this study, I found some evidence to support these propositions and, for some students, a lack of support. Not all Latino students find a great distance between their home culture and the academic culture, especially if they have assimilated into the dominant culture. I will discuss these differences by using the acculturation strategies categories to point out the supporting and contradicting evidence.

Marginalization

Since the two students categorized as “marginalized” (not connected to either culture) were, by definition, alienated from their cultures of origin and their cultures of immersion, it is difficult to evaluate the applicability of the Kuh and Love’s cultural perspective to them. Both Ricardo and John valued what they learned in their Chicano studies classes, but their intellectual understanding of their cultural heritage did not translate into developing a stronger Latino identity. They did not engage with student organizations at all and had little engagement with institutional agents outside the classroom. Both had scores on the SACQ which indicated that they are not likely to persist in college. This situation is consistent with the prediction in Kuh and Love’s cultural propositions that students who do not make sociocultural connections or find enclaves to join are less likely to persist.

Integration

The two students placed in the integration category both scored high on engagement and high on persistence. Because they were highly engaged, they had developed what Tinto (1993) calls social integration. Only Tula had developed the type of sociocultural connections described by Kuh and Love (2000) in their cultural perspective propositions. Her participation in the MEChA group seemed to give her both social and cultural capital which should contribute to her persistence. Maria's participation in student government increased her social but not her cultural capital. She talked about getting leadership training in the ASG, but that race was not something that was talked about there. Since Tula's family explicitly discussed the value of Mexican culture and, to some degree, encouraged her to "leave the white culture at the door" when she came home, she may have needed to find a place where culture is a part of the discourse. For both of these students, their participation in student organizations served as a type of enclave experience which should make persistence more likely. The fact that both of these organizations value persistence and achievement is also important, according to Kuh and Love.

Assimilation

The students who were in the assimilation category were more attuned to their culture of immersion (dominant society) than their cultures or origin (Mexican heritage). It was not a long distance for them because they had already made the journey and were fully living in the culture of immersion. Both Hector and Rosa were not engaged in student organizations, but had high scores on the SACQ. They were

likely to persist even though they did not have sociocultural connections on campus and were not in cultural enclaves. They spent most of their time in the mainstream culture and even though they had Latino friends at school, they did not have interest in Chicano Studies classes or MEChA. Kuh and Love's cultural perspective does not seem as relevant for this group of students.

Differentiation

For the two students who fit into the newly defined acculturation strategy category, the cultural propositions also seem to lack relevance. Both these students had high engagement but low persistence scores. Their engagement was more focused on academic or career success and not on sociocultural connections. While Geraldo had gained a sense of ethnic pride in his Chicano studies class, he did not join any ethnic student organization which could have served as an enclave to promote connections to the academic program and encourage academic achievement. Leticia's involvement with the academic support program (TRIO) gave her the academic connection and support, but did not seem to provide any cultural capital related to Latino culture. Although Leticia did not express any interest in developing more connection with her cultural heritage, she did recognize parts of her identity as being rooted in Latino cultural practices. Both of these students were engaged, but the type of engagement does not seem to be enough to help them persist. For these students, persistence may be increased if they are involved in the process of defining what is needed to address the needs of a heterogeneous group of Latino students. In the next section, I propose a model which would afford that opportunity.

Comparison of Persistence Models

One of the purposes of this study was to examine the accepted model of student persistence (Tinto, 1993), the Student-Initiated Retention Project model (Maldonado, et al., 2005) and to consider the cultural perspectives of Kuh and Love (2000) in order to propose a new model that might be more helpful in increasing the retention of ethnic minority students. This new model is shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Comparison of Persistence Models

Integration Model	Cultural Empowerment Model	Student-Initiated Retention Project
Pre-entry Attributes		
Family Background Skills and Abilities Prior Schooling	Human Capital Social and Cultural Capital Acculturative Stress	Social and Cultural Capital
Institutional Experiences		
<u>Academic</u> Academic performance Faculty and staff interactions <u>Social</u> Extracurricular activities Peer group interactions	<u>Engagement</u> Institutional agents Ethnic student organizations Ethnic studies classes College initiatives promoting student empowerment	Social and cultural capital building Collective ethnic identity development Social activism
Goals		
Academic and Social Integration	Cultural Integration and Empowerment	Student Change Agents
Departure decision		

The first area of comparison is Tinto's idea of pre-entry attributes. While he lists family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling, the Cultural Empowerment Model focuses on social, cultural and human capital, and acculturative stress. There are some similar meanings in both models, but the differences are significant. Family background has mostly referred to educational background of the student's parents. While this factor would be related to social capital, social capital can be gained in other ways than just from parents' education. A student may have other sources of social capital such as other family members, friends, and media sources. Evaluating the student's personal social capital is a more relevant factor.

Skills and abilities, as well as prior schooling are highly related to human capital but, as traditionally measured, may not include cultural knowledge. Human capital may be a broader term which can include the knowledge and abilities gained from non-formal learning. Cultural capital is totally ignored in Tinto's model and, consequently, leaves out the value of what pre-entry assets they bring to college. On the other hand, without acknowledging acculturative stress as a pre-entry attribute, there is danger of attributing lower persistence rates among Latinos to lack of ability without accounting for the effects of this type of stress. This would be like putting a group of athletes on the starting line of a race with some of them having 50 pound bags of dirt on their backs and then, when they finish behind the other group of runners, blaming the slower ones for being poor athletes while ignoring the obvious disadvantage.

Model Goals

Before comparing how these models describe institutional experiences, it may be helpful to look at what the goals are for each model. Tinto used academic and social integration as the goal that, when achieved, would lead to persistence. In the Cultural Empowerment Model the goal is integration of ethnic minority students' traditional culture with the American higher education culture. The process of achieving this goal must include student participation in the process so that they experience empowerment as change agents. In the Integration Model, student achievement (as reflected in GPA), interactions with faculty and staff, in and out of the classroom, extracurricular activities, and peer interactions are the critical variables. The SIRP definition of emancipation includes the development of social and cultural capital, the development of a collective ethnic identity, and becoming a social change agent. In the Cultural Empowerment Model, development of these factors occurs through engagement with ethnic studies classes, institutional agents and ethnic student organization.

While only one student who was interviewed seemed to go through this developmental process, she did report gaining a sense of empowerment as evidenced by growth in all the factors that SIRP proposes as contributors to empowerment. She also had the highest engagement score, a very high persistence score, and a low acculturative stress score. Using her situation as an exemplary model, I propose a combination of factors which would be most likely to result in persistence and empowerment. This combination is shown in Figure 3.

When students have pre-entry attributes that are less than exemplary (low levels of social and cultural capital and/or high levels of acculturative stress), the institutional experiences become more critical for student persistence. Students are usually not aware of their need for these institutional experiences so it becomes a challenge for the institution to find ways to connect these students with the supportive resources, such as student organizations, ethnic studies classes, and engagement with institutional agents.

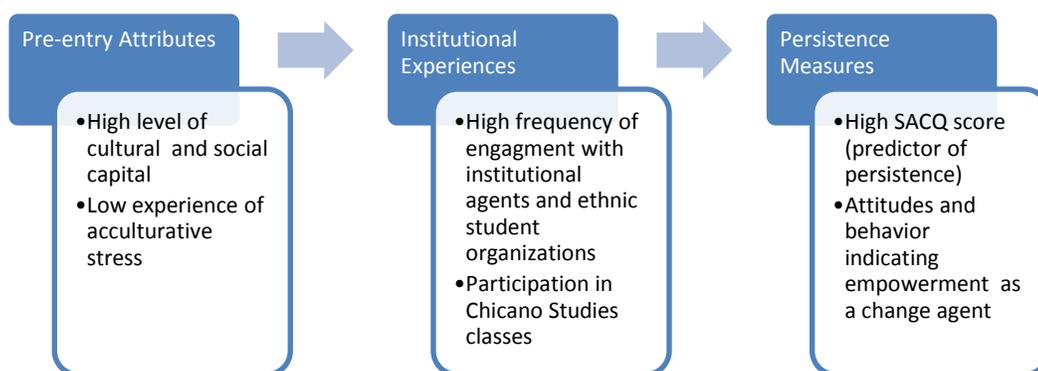


Figure 3. Exemplary factors leading to persistence and empowerment

Students with high acculturative stress may have barriers to becoming empowered because they do not engage with the possible sources of that empowerment on the campus. Also, students who are open to developing a more collective ethnic identity may benefit from ethnic studies classes where they will at least have classroom engagement with faculty who use empowering curriculum and have culturally supportive attitudes.

The Integration Model is a general explanation of how college students make decisions about whether to persist or depart before graduation. The Cultural

Empowerment Model is more specific about what types of pre-entry attributes and institutional experiences contribute to persistence for ethnic minority students. In addition, this model proposes that it is not just social and academic integration which is necessary for persistence, but that gaining a sense of empowerment is crucial for some ethnic minority students to persist.

While all three models have concepts that are helpful for researchers and practitioners to consider in order to increase the persistence of college students, the Integration Model is too general to address the needs of ethnic minority students and the SIRP model is too narrow to address the needs of different types of ethnic minority students. The Cultural Empowerment Model takes the concepts from both of the other models to reach the goal of cultural integration and empowerment. Based on the findings in this study, some Latino community college students benefit from engagement with institutional agents, student organizations, and Chicano Studies classes. Other students may benefit from this type of engagement but they are either not aware of the benefits or they have misgivings about how beneficial the engagement would be. This model challenges community colleges to adopt a broader view of persistence which includes specific types of engagement for Latino students. If students are included in this process of modifying traditional persistence efforts, the results may be more effective for the variety of types of Latino students.

CONCLUSION

This study addressed the persistence gap among Latino students in community colleges. Specifically, the research questions guiding the study were:

1. For Latino students attending community colleges, what role do institutional agents and student organizations play in persistence?
 - a. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect acculturative stress?
 - b. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect empowerment/social activism?
 - c. How do interactions with institutional agents and/or student organizations affect the development of social and/or cultural capital?
2. How do students perceive what happens when they interact with institutional agents and/or student organizations?

Using surveys and interviews, I explored the experiences of Latino students at a community college. Forty-five students completed measures of persistence, acculturative stress, and engagement which were used to explore relationships among these variables. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of eight of these Latino students on the community college campus.

The survey data indicated that there was a negative correlation between acculturative stress and persistence. Students with higher levels of acculturative stress

were predicted to be less likely to persist when the data were subject to regression analysis.

The data suggest that Latino students do experience acculturative stress in community colleges, and they respond to this stress in a variety of ways. The concept of acculturation strategies was used to analyze how students' type of acculturation was related to their persistence. Six of the eight students' who were interviewed used acculturation strategies that were aligned with their levels of persistence and engagement. A new category of acculturation strategy, differentiation, is suggested to align with the students who did not fit into any of the categories described by Berry and Sam (1997).

Finally, a new model of student persistence was proposed that considers acculturative stress and empowerment as cultural factors in persistence. Drawing from Tinto's (1975) Integration Model, and Maldonado's (2005) Student-Initiated Retention Project Model, the Cultural Empowerment is designed to incorporate acculturative stress and empowerment into a culturally inclusive model.

Implications for Theories of College Persistence

Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student departure has been the foundation of the theoretical framework for researchers interested in increasing college student persistence. The SIRP model has been proposed to address the needs and perspectives of ethnic minority students. Kuh and Love's (2000) Cultural Perspective raises issues of how to best support students as they transition from their "cultures of origin" to the "cultures of immersion". This study lends support to the position that the concept of

acculturative stress should be considered in any theoretical framework underlying research on persistence of Latino students, and, perhaps, all ethnic minority students.

Additionally, the idea that there is one way of addressing the needs of Latino students is challenged by the findings in this study. Different students use different acculturation strategies which should be reflected in our thinking about models of student persistence. Specifically, examining the goals of a model is important so that the model reflects the needs of diverse groups of students. While integration into the college culture may be a helpful goal for some students, and empowerment may also work for other students, ultimately, there may need to be multiple models to address all students.

Implications for Research on College Persistence

As new theories emerge, researchers will need to explore the proposed models and frameworks to find out how these models work in different settings. There are many categories of educational settings, regional and historical contexts, student populations, and institutional missions which can influence the outcomes of persistence studies.

Community colleges should be of interest to many researchers interested in persistence for ethnic minority students since, according to Foote (1997), 46% of minority students enrolled in higher education in the United States attend community colleges. Models developed to address cultural perspectives should be tested in a variety of community college settings (e.g. rural, urban) and different areas of the United States as well as other countries. The diversity of the student population

should also be considered in future research. Colleges with high percentages of ethnic minority students may have different results than those that are predominately white. What is effective for persistence for different ethnic minority groups may also differ. The findings in this study indicate that there is one subgroup within the Latino student population which may benefit from engagement with institutional agents in ways that not all Latino students do. Further research which disaggregates various subgroups within ethnic minority populations may be similarly fruitful.

Implications for Community College Leaders

The implications of this study for community college leaders, including administrators, faculty and staff, are related to the re-definition of accepted terms and concepts. If acculturative stress is a hindrance to persistence, colleges should be proactive in addressing this aspect of students' experiences. Community college leaders must be willing to discuss ethnic and racial issues at all levels of the institution, including faculty development, student government and clubs, staff training, governing board orientation, and in the curriculum. Institutions need to acknowledge that there are people on the campus (institutional agents) who can speak to these issues and can provide support for students struggling with the effects of acculturative stress. Ethnic student organizations and ethnic studies classes should be promoted as ways to support the persistence of students experiencing acculturative stress.

Community college persistence cannot be defined in just one way. We have to ask, "Persistence for whom?" because the support that is needed for students to persist varies within ethnic groups as well as between them. Strategies traditionally proposed

to “integrate” students into the college culture (faculty-student interaction, extracurricular activities) may have to be refined. Students should be encouraged to identify the types of interaction and activities that they find meaningful in supporting their college-attending success. If students are “empowered” to change the college culture and, in the process, to be more engaged, they are more likely to persist.

At present, faculty and administrators at community colleges are pre-occupied with the requirement from accreditation agencies to develop student learning outcomes. Colleges are now required to define what is expected of students when they complete a course or program of study. Most community colleges have a multicultural course requirement for graduation, but the issues brought to light in this study are not addressed as learning outcomes in multicultural classes. Making empowerment, for all students, an explicit learning outcome at the institutional level would make it clear that cultural issues are important to address in all classes. This institutional goal would encourage faculty to provide opportunities for the development of social and cultural capital as well as addressing collective ethnic identity and social activism.

While conducting this study, I talked with many students about issues of race and culture. While most of those I talked with felt that the college was a good place for Latino students to get an education, many of them expressed a hesitancy to talk openly about the self-segregation that still occurs along ethnic lines. One student in the study said that she thought that the clubs were helpful in breaking down this segregation because when ethnic student organizations worked together on projects,

students from different ethnic groups talked to one another. Without the student organizations focusing on working together, students have no reason to break out of their groups, according to this student. Colleges have an opportunity to encourage open discussion about issues of race and culture that can reduce (or at least reveal) the marginalization of ethnic minority students. At this college, there have been several Latino student panels where the students' talk about their own experiences. These events offer an opportunity for the campus community to become more educated about the stressful issues Latino students face. If the campus community is educated about the effects of acculturative stress, poverty, undocumented immigrant status, and other relevant issues, the college has an opportunity to provide appropriate support.

In exploring the roles of institutional agents and student organizations, I heard about faculty, counselors and advisors who are making a difference in the lives of students. There are people who reach out to the students and give them a vision of success that the students may not be able to see without that encouragement. This type of support undoubtedly increases persistence. The more that these institutional agents can be identified and given recognition, the more likely it is that this type of behavior will become the norm. It is especially meaningful to ethnic minority students to have mentors who understand their struggles and encourage them to persist.

The persistence gap will not be closed until college leaders acknowledge the role the institution plays in this gap and there is a concerted effort on the part of faculty, administrators and staff to provide a variety of supportive resources. These resources must address the effects of acculturative stress as a barrier to academic

success for ethnic minority students. One way of helping students to become empowered is to include them in the campus-wide discussions on what needs to change. As students become engaged in institutional change, they will be more likely to persist.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Research Study Participant Survey

Appendix B - Informed Consent for Participation in Research – Survey

Appendix C - Informed Consent for Participation in Research – Interview

Appendix D - Audiotape Recording Release Form

Appendix E - Interactions with Institutional Agents and Student Organizations

Appendix A - Research Study Participant Survey

- _____ 1. Have you been attending [the college] for at least one semester (not counting this one)?
- _____ 2. Would you use any of the following terms to describe your ethnicity/race?
Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano
- _____ 3. Are you over 18 years old?
- _____ 4. Are you willing to participate in a research study seeking to find better ways to help students succeed in college? (1 hour maximum time for surveys; additional time is optional for second part involving interviews)

If you said yes to all four questions, fill in the information below and you will be contacted to set up a time to complete the surveys.

If you said no to any of the above questions, you can skip the rest of this survey and turn it in when the surveys are collected.

Name _____ Phone _____

Email (please print clearly) _____

Preferred way to be contacted:

_____ Phone _____ Text _____ Email

Since you have attended [the college], have you joined any student organizations? _____

If yes, which one(s)? _____

How many semesters have you completed at [the college]? _____

Do you attend full-time (12 or more units per semester) or part-time? _____

Did either of your parents complete a college degree? _____

If you have any questions about this survey or your participation in the research,
contact

Judy Wilson at [email address].

Thank you!

Appendix B - Informed Consent for Participation in Research – Survey

Persistence of Latino Students in Community Colleges: The Role of Institutional Agents and Student Organizations

Principal Investigator: Judy Wilson

Judy Wilson, a graduate student in the Education Studies department at the University of California, San Diego, is conducting a research study to find out how students find the resources they need to succeed at a community college. You have been identified to participate in this study because you are a student at Palomar College and you have attended Palomar for at least one semester. There will be approximately 100 participants from Palomar College in this study.

This form is to seek your permission to participate in a study on the factors that contribute to the success of students at a community college. The study is being conducted as part of the Education Studies Doctoral Program in Teaching and Learning at the University of California, San Diego. The purpose of this study is to explore the different ways that students find support at a community college.

Study Objective: The objective of this study is to explore how community college students experience their interactions with certain types of people and groups on campus and how these interactions provide support for the student.

Your Role: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in filling out three surveys. This should take a total of no more than 60 minutes. If you are contacted for the second part of the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting 60 minutes or less. Your interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. You will be able to view and assess the accuracy of the interview transcription. If you participate in the interview part of the study, you will be given a \$25 gift card. Only eight students will be asked to complete an interview.

Risk: Participation in this study may involve the potential for the loss of confidentiality. To minimize this risk, your survey information will be kept confidential, available only to Judy Wilson and collaborating researchers for analysis purposes. Your name will not appear on any forms resulting from the surveys and your name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions. Research records will be kept confidential. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board and faculty of the UCSD Education Studies Program. Records from the surveys will either be used for future educational purposes or destroyed upon completion of the study.

Other risks to participants in this study are the risks associated with surveys: stress, frustration, discomfort, fatigue and boredom. If you experience any of these, you may

take a break from completing the surveys or discontinue your participation in the study.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable.

Benefits: There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation in this study will inform educational researchers and practitioners about aspects of supporting Latino students at a community college.

Your Rights: Participation in the research study is voluntary. Your participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your position as a student at the college. It is your right to decline to answer any question that is asked, and you are free to end interviewing, and/or audio recording at any time. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. If you choose to drop out of the study all information obtained from you will be deleted from the study. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate.

The Principal Investigator (PI) may remove you from the study without your consent if the PI feels it is in your best interest or the best interest of the study. You may also be withdrawn from the study if you do not follow instructions given you by the study personnel.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this study for those who complete the surveys. There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

By verbally giving your consent, you indicate that Judy Wilson has explained this study, answered your questions, and that you voluntarily grant your consent, which can be withdrawn at any time, for participation in this study. If you have any questions about this study or research-related problems you may reach Judy Wilson, at (760) 586-1492 or jcw022@ucsd.edu. Also, questions about the study can be addressed to her advisor, Dr. Paula Levin, plevin@ucsd.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, San Diego Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-5050.

Appendix C - Informed Consent for Participation in Research - Interview

Persistence of Latino Students in Community Colleges: The Role of Institutional Agents and Student Organizations

Principal Investigator: Judy Wilson

Judy Wilson, a graduate student in the Education Studies department at the University of California, San Diego, is conducting a research study to find out how students find the resources they need to succeed at a community college. You have been identified to participate in this study because you are a student at Palomar College and you have attended Palomar for at least one semester.

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Study Objective: The objective of this study is to explore how community college students experience their interactions with certain types of people and groups on campus and how these interactions provide support for the student.

Your Role: You are being asked to participate in an interview lasting 60 minutes or less. Your interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. You will be able to view and assess the accuracy of the interview transcription. If you participate in the interview part of the study, you will be given a \$25 gift card. Only twelve students will be asked to complete an interview.

Risk: Participation in this study may involve the potential for the loss of confidentiality. To minimize this risk, your interview will be kept confidential, available only to Judy Wilson and collaborating researchers for analysis purposes. Your name will not appear on any transcripts resulting from the interview and your name and identity will remain confidential in any publications or discussions. Your identity will also remain anonymous to the transcriptionist when the interviews are transcribed. The transcriptions will be kept in a password protected file or in a locked cabinet for the duration of the study. Research records will be kept confidential. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board and faculty of the UCSD Education Studies Program. Per your preference indicated on the audio recording consent forms, transcripts will either be used for future educational purposes or destroyed upon completion of the study. Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable.

Benefits: There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation in this study will inform educational researchers and practitioners about aspects of supporting Latino students at a community college.

Your Rights: Participation in the research study is voluntary. Your participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your position as a student at the college. It is your right to decline to answer any question that is asked, and you are free to end interviewing, and/or audio recording at any time. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. If you choose to drop out of the study all information obtained from you will be deleted from the study. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate.

The Principal Investigator (PI) may remove you from the study without your consent if the PI feels it is in your best interest or the best interest of the study. You may also be withdrawn from the study if you do not follow instructions given you by the study personnel.

Compensation: Those who participate in an interview will be given a \$25 gift card. There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

By verbally giving your consent, you indicate that Judy Wilson has explained this study, answered your questions, and that you voluntarily grant your consent, which can be withdrawn at any time, for participation in this study. If you have any questions about this study or research-related problems you may reach Judy Wilson, at (760) 586-1492 or jcw022@ucsd.edu. Also, questions about the study can be addressed to her advisor, Dr. Paula Levin, plevin@ucsd.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, San Diego Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-5050.

Appendix D - Audiotape Recording Release Form

Persistence of Latino Students in Community Colleges: The Role of Institutional Agents and Student Organizations

Principal Investigator: Judy Wilson

Audiotape recordings will be made of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate verbally the uses of these audiotape recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audiotapes, your name will not be identified and your identity will be kept anonymous. You may request to stop the taping at any time or to erase any portion of your taped recording.

1. The audiotapes can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
2. The audiotapes can be used for scientific publications.
3. The audiotapes can be reviewed in classrooms by students for educational purposes.
4. The audiotapes can be reviewed at meetings of scientists interested in the study of education and educational practice.

You have the right to request that the audiotape be stopped or erased during the recording.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audiotapes as indicated above.

***If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Judy Wilson,
jcw022@ucsd.edu or (760) 586-1492.***

Appendix E – Interactions with Institutional Agents and Student Organizations

Listed below are two definitions of experiences that some college students have. Please indicate if you have had these experiences and how often you have experienced each of them.

1. I have experienced interactions with faculty or staff at Palomar who have encouraged me by providing resources, opportunities, privileges and/or services that contributed to my staying in college.

Circle the number which represents how often you have experienced this type of interaction (the higher the number the more often it has happened).

Never

Every week

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

2. I have participated in an ethnic student organization at Palomar (for example, MEChA, Encuentros, Ballet Folklórico, etc.) which has included meaningful interactions with the members.

Circle the number which represents how often you have experienced this type of interaction (the higher the number the more often it has happened).

Never

Every week

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Name of the student organization(s) _____

Your name _____

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