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Neither Colorblind Nor Oppositional: Perceived Minority Status and Trajectories of Academic Adjustment Among Latinos in Elite Higher Education

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As more Latinos experience upward social mobility, it is increasingly necessary to challenge oppositional cultural assumptions to explain how perceived minority status barriers may influence their academic achievement. The present study builds on previous work that identified 3 distinct minority status orientations among Latino college students entering elite colleges—which the authors call *assimilation*, *accommodation*, and *resistance*. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, the authors examined how these orientations influence Latino students' academic and social adjustment from their freshman to junior years of college. Latino students who most strongly questioned the openness of the opportunity structure to ethnic minorities—resisters—reported similar grades and time spent studying as their counterparts who perceived less ethnic and racial inequities. In addition, resisters did not disengage from their social environment but rather became increasingly involved in campus activities outside the classroom during their college career. Implications for understanding ethnic minority individuals' interpretations of social stratification in well-resourced, high-achieving contexts are discussed.

Keywords: Latinos, academic achievement, academic engagement, minority status

With the ever-growing presence of Latinos in the American landscape, there has been an increasing interest in the diversity of their academic experiences and outcomes. Surprisingly little research has focused on how Latinos perceive the openness of the opportunity structure for ethnic and racial minorities during the developmental period known as emerging adulthood. Yet it is during this time that such individuals will likely make decisions that ultimately shape the kinds of social and economic contributions they will be able to make to society as adults (Arnett, 2000). One such decision that greatly influences individuals' later contribution to society is college attendance and graduation. Consider that as of 2007, just 12% of Latinos aged 25–29 had attained a bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008); thus, many members of this extremely young and growing ethnic group do not have a 4-year college education that would allow them to then attain the graduate and professional degrees that provide necessary credentials for the most financially rewarded and highest status careers in adulthood (e.g., medicine, law; Fry, 2004; Quintana, Vogel, & Ybarra, 1991). Although Latinos in the top tier of American higher education are clearly poised to garner greater wealth and status from their occupations than their ethnic peers with lower levels of educational attainment, even Latino students in elite colleges perform less well academically relative to their White counterparts (Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003).

Although Latinos generally have dual experiences stemming from their immigrant and ethnic minority backgrounds, the effects of perceived minority status on how they respond to a restricted opportunity structure has been underexplored (see, e.g., Quintana, 2007; Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003). Some research from the fields of psychology, education, and sociology has focused on describing immigrant Latinos' resilience or optimism in the face of an ethnically stratified opportunity structure (e.g., Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Other research indicates that immigrant youth develop numerous and distinct pathways to navigate academic choices and goals, which produce varying outcomes (e.g., Alba & Nee, 2003; Fuligni & Witkow, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Sears et al., 2003; Tseng, 2006). Moreover, not only do immigrant youth of different generations or from different national origin groups approach adaptation differently, but individuals within generational or national origin groups perceive different levels of opportunity for ethnic minorities (e.g., beliefs about the utility of education for upward mobility; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Yet, little research examines whether and how individual differences in perceived minority status barriers to opportunity inform Latinos' academic engagement and performance over time. The notably few previous empirical examinations of perceived barriers among Latinos have focused on younger adolescents, for whom these perceptions were linked to less positive academic outcomes (e.g., Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Taylor & Graham, 2007). It is unclear how such perceptions would function among Latinos who have gained entry into elite higher education.

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As a first step toward understanding how the immigrant and minority backgrounds of high-achieving Latinos influence their college experiences, in previous work with the present sample (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008), we identified profiles that are consistent with three orientations often discussed in immigrant adaptation literature, which we called *assimilation*, *accommodation*, and *resistance*. Assimilators felt the least ethnically distinctive from Whites, while resisters most strongly questioned the openness of the opportunity structure to ethnic minorities. By comparison, accommodators endorsed a mixed set of beliefs; they felt ethnically distinctive from Whites but maintained optimism toward the opportunity structure of the United States. Our purpose for the present study was to examine whether membership in these three profiles upon the transition to college was differentially associated with changes in individuals' academic performance and engagement as well as their extracurricular engagement (e.g., time spent involved in campus organizations, leadership, volunteerism) over the course of their college years.

Guiding Frameworks

Perceived Minority Status Orientations

Understanding the role of perceived minority status in the academic experiences of Latino high achievers may yield important information about how children of immigrant families may embark upon divergent life trajectories during the transition to adulthood. Theory and research suggests that there are multiple ways[1] in which children from immigrant families psychologically negotiate perceived barriers to opportunity as well as feelings of social distance from the mainstream (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). One pattern reflects an assimilation orientation, in which youth intentionally or unintentionally forsake their ethnic distinctiveness in favor of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are more consistent with those of the mainstream and thus are presumed to fare well in academic situations (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Berry and colleagues' (2006) comparative study of adolescents from immigrant families in 13 countries identified a group whose attitudes and beliefs were oriented toward what they called a national identity rather than an ethnic identity. In a recent study using the Latino sample of the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF), we (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008) also identified an assimilation profile, which comprised students who believed that educated minorities would get ahead and who perceived neither individual nor societal barriers to upward mobility.

A second pattern is one of accommodation, in which youth retain beliefs and practices that may mark them as ethnically distinct from Whites but which do not conflict with mainstream sensibilities (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Gibson, 1988, 2005; Kao & Tienda, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). This type of adaptation is frequently used to explain the *immigrant optimism* phenomenon, whereby children from immigrant families fare better than their native counterparts despite the disadvantages they face. Berry and colleagues' (2006) research, for example, identified an accommodation profile (what they called *integration*) that demonstrated the best psychological and academic adjustment of the youth in the sample. In our earlier work, we identified a cluster of students who strongly endorsed the mainstream achievement ideology that emphasizes individual effort while simultaneously reporting awareness of discrimination. In other words, this group of students believed that individual effort and qualifications could overcome discrimination (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008). Some would argue that in accommodating to the existing social order, these students justified the logic by which it works (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

A third pattern, resistance, entails a strong sense of ethnic distinctiveness (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). For example, Berry and colleagues (2006) classified a group of youth who were oriented more toward an ethnic minority than a national identity. Similarly, we identified a profile of Latino students who were more skeptical than their coethnic peers about equality of opportunity for educated minorities, who strongly believed that ethnic minorities must contend with discrimination in the workforce, and who reported the greatest level of social distance from Whites. In previous cross-sectional research, youth with this orientation have fared less well in school than accommodators (Berry et al. 2006; Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008).

Oppositional Culture and Academic Adjustment

The notion of resistance is often associated with oppositional culture theory, which posits that perceptions of blocked opportunity lead minority youth to disengage from academic work (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).[2] Oppositional culture theory has received much opposition, so to speak, in recent years. Psychology, sociology, and education researchers alike (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Bernal, Saenz, & Knight, 2001; Carter, 2005; Chavous et al., 2003; Lee, 1996; O'Connor, 1997; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005) have critiqued oppositional culture theory for associating all forms of strong minority identity with underachievement. If oppositional culture theory were applicable to the case of Latinos in the NLSF study, for example, it would be illogical to find, as we did, that such high-achieving students oppose the very pathway through which they have found success. We use the term *resistance*, then, simply to indicate that high-achieving individuals may critique the dominant ideology of individual effort to overcome stratification. Even if individuals have

[1] For example, Berry speaks of four types—three adaptive and one maladaptive—of acculturation strategies. Those who evince the poorest academic adjustment are found in the fourth and least common pattern, *marginalization.* Marginalized young people feel distinct not only from larger society but also from their ethnic group; such individuals are the most alienated from mainstream institutions (and especially elite institutions of higher education) and demonstrate what has been called *downward assimilation* (Berry, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Given the nature of the NLSF study, it is not surprising that this pattern was not identified among the Latino students in the sample, a group of individuals that have navigated and are engaged with mainstream institutions; thus, it will not be discussed further.

[2] It is important to note that the logic of oppositional culture, although derived from the minority experience of African Americans, has been applied to Latinos as well (Farkas, 2008). Similarly, other theories initially based on studies of African Americans (e.g., stereotype threat) have been extended to Latinos based on the assumption of a common stigmatized status (e.g., Brown & Lee, 2005; Gonzales et al., 2002; Steele, 1997).

moved up due to individual effort, they can simultaneously critique ethnically stratified systems for blocking the upward mobility of others from backgrounds similar to theirs.

The present line of research thus contributes to reframing of the relationship between minority identity and academic achievement to move beyond oppositional culture theory. For example, several scholars have demonstrated how Latino and Black students can successfully use a strong minority identity to support achievement (e.g., Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Chavous et al., 2003; Gurin & Epps, 1975; O'Connor, 1997). Furthermore, the most successful students Carter (2005) identified—whom she calls *cultural straddlers*—knew how to code switch or utilize multiple sources of cultural knowledge to gain the trust of their superiors in mainstream (i.e., White-dominated) educational institutions. At the same time, these cultural straddlers succeeded in "keepin' it real"—or fitting in—with their peers who adopted more critical (or oppositional) dispositions toward the opportunity structure. Thus, Carter (2005) aptly summarized one of the major critiques of oppositional culture theory by asserting that "achievement need not be based on an illusionary belief in equal access and the openness of the American opportunity system" (p. 30). In other words, race consciousness, not just color blindness, presents one possible adaptive path for Latino and Black youth.

As ethnic minority students leave their homes and enter predominantly White college campuses, they may find potentially threatening aspects in their new social and academic environment. Because ethnic and racial issues are often highly salient on predominantly White college campuses (see Chavous, 2005; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000), resisters may be better prepared than accommodators or assimilators to find alternative ways to engage with other students and faculty by drawing on their strong in-group identity to resist threats to their self-identity and sense of belonging at college. For example, in examining Latino college students' adaptation, Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that membership in social-community organizations, religious groups, student government, and sports teams were all associated with a greater sense of belonging in college. Importantly, Hurtado and Carter (1997) also found that, among Latino students who reported hostile racial climates on campus, those who were members of ethnic minority student organizations reported a greater sense of belonging than nonmembers. In another study, the more ethnic minority students thought of themselves as ethnic group members and felt their group membership was important to them, the more likely they were to join an ethnic minority-focused organization (Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Chavous (2005) found that Black students who perceived their campus racial climate to be less egalitarian were more likely to be involved in campus organizations. In sum, several studies have documented how ethnic minority (including Latino) students' involvement in multiple communities outside the classroom may help them negotiate ethnically based academic and social threats in predominantly White institutions (e.g., Attinasi, 1989; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

The Current Study

The central research question guiding the present study concerns the extent to which perceived minority status influences individual Latino students' academic and extracurricular engagement in college. Latino students of diverse social backgrounds arrive at elite colleges and universities with a set of beliefs that may be challenged or reaffirmed in their new context. Thus, we expected students in each profile—assimilation, accommodation, and resistance—to demonstrate different trajectories of academic and extracurricular engagement. First, we reasoned that assimilators—whose views suggest that minority status has little or no bearing on differential opportunity—might be less likely to pick up cues about disadvantage and thus be the least vulnerable to group stereotypes that would lead to diminished academic engagement and performance (e.g., Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). Thus, we expected them to report steadily high academic performance and engagement over time as well as a steady level of engagement with extracurricular activities. In our previous work, we found that, relative to resisters, accommodators were more likely to exhibit a negative effect of on-campus prejudice on their academic achievement. In the present study, we hypothesized that accommodators would demonstrate increasingly stronger academic engagement over time than assimilators and resisters as they expended even more individual effort on academics in spite of perceived barriers (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). We also expected accommodators to spend similar amounts of time on extracurricular activities relative to assimilators.

With regard to members of the resistance profile, we developed competing hypotheses. On the one hand, as resisters seemed most concerned with issues of ethnic and racial inequality, we reasoned that they may be most vulnerable to disengaging from the mainstream social system by being less engaged with academics. On the other hand, several researchers (e.g., Carter, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975) found that race-conscious individuals indeed often maintain a steady level of engagement with their academics and further that these individuals might find ways to create a positive experience within a context that they might perceive as threatening. Thus, relative to the other two groups, we expected resisters to report spending increasingly more time involved in campus organizations and activities that would foster nonacademic connections to others.

Method

Participants

In this study, we used data from the Hispanic/Latino sample of Waves 1–5 of the NLSF (see Massey et al., 2003). Students were sampled at 28 highly selective colleges and universities in the United States (see Massey et al., 2003, for details of the sampling strategy as well as the list of schools and the demographic characteristics of the overall sample). Baseline data (Wave 1) were originally collected in face-to-face interviews in the fall of 1999. Subsequent data were collected in telephone interviews during the spring semesters of 2000 (Wave 2), 2001 (Wave 3), 2002 (Wave 4), and 2003 (Wave 5). The response rate for the entire NLSF sample was 97% in Wave 1, 95% in Wave 2, 89% in Wave 3, 84% in Wave 4, and 79% in Wave 5. Of the initial NLSF sample, 916 participants (58% female) self-identified as Hispanic or Latino when entering college. According to baseline data for Hispanics/Latinos, we know that 68% had at least one foreign-born parent, and 32% ($n = 293$) were U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents. The sample was diverse by Latin American origin as well, with students of Mexican (26%), Puerto Rican (10%), Central American (4.6%), South American (15%), Dominican (3%), and Cuban

(4.5%) backgrounds. In addition, more than one third (37%) of the sample identified as having multiethnic or multiracial backgrounds, and most of those students said that they had one Hispanic parent and one White non-Hispanic parent. Although 31% reported that they were first-generation college students, students tended to have economically advantaged backgrounds. For example, 42% of students reported family incomes of over $75,000 at the baseline.

The present analyses focus on the 890 participants included in the previous cluster analyses on which the profiles of perceived minority status are based. Of these students, 79% had GPA data at all waves subsequent to the baseline (Waves 2–5), 72% had complete longitudinal academic engagement data (Waves 2–4), and 72% had complete longitudinal extracurricular engagement data (Waves 2–4). We conducted independent samples *t* tests to examine differences in high school GPA for those who had complete data at all time points (Waves 2–5 for GPA and Waves 2–4 for engagement variables) and those who did not. Students with complete data for GPA, academic engagement, and extracurricular engagement reported higher GPAs in high school than did those with incomplete data, $t(888) = -3.62$, $p < .001$; $t(888) = -2.15$, $p < .05$; and $t(888) = -1.99$, $p = .05$, respectively. In addition, those in the assimilation and resistance profiles were more likely to have complete GPA data than those in the accommodation profile, $\chi^2(2) = 7.63$, $p < .05$; however, examination of the standardized residual revealed that it was less than 2.0, thus accommodators were only slightly underrepresented among those with complete data. Finally, women, $\chi^2(1) = 4.45$, $p < .05$, were more likely to have complete academic and extracurricular engagement data than were men, $\chi^2(1) = 4.53$, $p < .05$; here, too, the standardized residuals were less than 2.0.

Measures

Minority status profiles. In the baseline survey (Wave 1), four perceptions and beliefs about minority status barriers were assessed: (a) educated Latinos, Blacks, and Asians encounter equal opportunity (6 items; $\alpha = .89$); (b) individual qualifications can overcome discrimination (3 items; $\alpha = .94$); (c) individual effort can overcome discrimination (3 items; $\alpha = .91$); and (d) Latinos, Blacks, and Asians encounter discriminatory job ceilings (3 items; $\alpha = .86$). In addition, students were asked to indicate how close they felt to Whites as an indicator of social distance from the majority group at their colleges and universities (3 items). Using standardized values of these five variables, we used *k* means iterative cluster analysis to create groups that reflect distinct profiles of adaptation. As discussed above, three profiles were identified: assimilation ($n = 228$), accommodation ($n = 282$), and resistance ($n = 380$); these were reliably replicated in two random halves of the sample (see Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008, for additional details about the measures as well as the cluster analyses). Assimilators did not think that minorities faced a lot of discrimination (approximately –0.91 *SD* below the mean) nor did they think minorities need to earn extra credentials to compete in the job market (–0.73 and –1.02 *SD* below the means for effort and qualifications, respectively). Accommodators were distinguished by their strong endorsement of the mainstream ideology (0.73 *SD* above the mean for equal opportunity); they believed that those who work hard (0.74 *SD* above the mean for effort) and earn educational credentials (0.53 *SD* above the mean for qualifications) will have success in finding a good job despite encountering discrimination. Resisters were the most skeptical of the mainstream ideology (–0.46 *SD* below the mean for equal opportunity). They perceived high levels of discrimination against minorities (0.64 *SD* above the mean) and said they felt more distant from Whites than the other two groups (0.56 *SD* above the mean). In the present research, we used membership in these profiles (i.e., based on baseline data upon the transition to college) as an individual-level predictor of change in academic performance, and we used time use in multilevel growth curve analyses.

Academic adjustment. We used self-reported freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior GPAs (all on 4-point scales, where 4 = A) as indicators of academic performance; this information was collected at Waves 2–5. In addition, we used an indicator of academic engagement that asked students how many hours per week they spent on academics only; this information was collected at Waves 2, 3, and 4, corresponding to freshman through junior years. In addition to time spent on academics, extracurricular campus engagement at college (e.g., with clubs, organizations, and volunteerism) reflects whether and how students are able to navigate the academic environment that occurs outside the classroom. These activities appear to play a particularly important role in the development of ethnic and racial minority college students, many of whom may feel isolated in predominantly White campuses (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997). To assess engagement with the campus, we used an indicator of how many hours per week students spent on extracurricular activities such as leadership, community involvement, and volunteerism. These data were also available only from freshman to junior years. Both measures excluded time spent on recreational activities such as spending time hanging out with friends or watching television.

Covariates. We used gender (female = 1), parental immigrant status (1 = either mother or father is foreign born), whether the student's family had ever been on public assistance (public assistance = 1), family income at baseline, status as a first-generation college student (1 = neither parent had a college degree), and self-reported high school GPA as time-invariant covariates in longitudinal analyses.

Analysis Strategy

For analyses of profile differences in academic adjustment over time, we examined a two-level model that nested time within individual. We then used cluster membership at baseline as an individual-level concurrent and longitudinal predictor of GPA. These analyses are summarized by the following equations using Raudenbush & Bryk (2002) notation:

$$\text{Level 1: } \text{GPA} = \beta 0 + (\beta 1 \times \text{Time}) + r$$

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Level 2: } \beta 0 = {} & \gamma 00 + (\gamma 01 \times \text{Accommodation}) \\ & + (\gamma 02 \times \text{Resistance}) + (\gamma 03 \times \text{Female}) \\ & + (\gamma 04 \times \text{Immigrant Parent}) \\ & + (\gamma 05 \times \text{Family Income}) \\ & + (\gamma 07 \times \text{Public Assistance}) + (\gamma 06\end{aligned}$$

$$\times \text{ First-Generation College})$$
$$+ (\gamma 07 \times \text{High School GPA}) + (\gamma 08$$
$$\times \text{Mexican}) + (\gamma 09 \times \text{Puerto Rican}) + (\gamma 10$$
$$\times \text{Central American}) + (\gamma 11$$
$$\times \text{South American}) + (\gamma 12 \times \text{Dominican})$$
$$+ (\gamma 13 \times \text{Cuban}) + U0$$
$$\beta 1 = \gamma 10 + (\gamma 11 \times \text{Accommodation})$$
$$+ (\gamma 12 \times \text{Resistance}) + (\gamma 13 \times \text{Female})$$
$$+ (\gamma 14 \times \text{Immigrant Parent}) + (\gamma 15$$
$$\times \text{Family Income}) + (\gamma 16$$
$$\times \text{First-Generation College}) + (\gamma 17$$
$$\times \text{High School GPA}) + (\gamma 18$$
$$\times \text{Mexican}) + (\gamma 19 \times \text{Puerto Rican}) + (\gamma 110$$
$$\times \text{Central American}) + (\gamma 111$$
$$\times \text{South American}) + (\gamma 112 \times \text{Dominican})$$
$$+ (\gamma 113 \times \text{Cuban})$$

where r is the error term and U is the Level 2 random effect. All variables were grand mean centered except for dichotomous variables (e.g., cluster membership, background control variables), because the zeros were meaningful for interpretation. All analyses were conducted using the mixed model procedure in SPSS with the restricted maximum likelihood solution. Because we were interested in initial profile differences in academic adjustment (i.e., 1st year of college), we centered time such that Wave 2 = 0. It should be noted as well that a quadratic term was initially included in the GPA and academic time use models, but it was not significant as a fixed effect and furthermore did not substantially improve the fit of the unconditional models according to the Akaike information criterion for each outcome (AIC_{GPA} increase = 8.28 and $AIC_{Academic\ time}$ decrease = 4.30). The quadratic effect in the unconditional extracurricular time use model was retained in subsequent analyses because it was significant, as will be discussed below.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means and standard deviations of academic performance, time spent on academic activities, and time spent on extracurricular engagement at each wave are summarized in Table 1 overall and by profile. An analysis of variance revealed that there were profile differences in GPA as sophomores (i.e., spring of sophomore year; $F[2, 748] = 3.36$; $p < .05$); in post hoc Tukey tests, assimilators were found to report higher grades on average than resisters. Otherwise, there were no significant differences in GPA or engagement outcomes between profiles within each wave.

Primary Analyses

Academic performance. Our discussion of the primary results begins with the unconditional model for academic performance trajectories. Students began with an average GPA of 3.10 (SE = 0.02, $p < .001$) in the spring of freshman year, and their grades increased, on average, by .09 (SE = 0.01, $p < .001$) every additional academic year. Adding the hypothesized predictors substantially improved the fit of the model (AIC decrease = 57.84). In the hypothesized model, freshman GPA was positively associated with being female, family income, and with high school GPA (see

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) for Outcome Variables

Variable	Freshman year	Sophomore year	Junior year	Senior year
		GPA		
Overall	3.10 (0.51)	3.18 (0.49)	3.32 (0.45)	3.40 (0.46)
Assimilators	3.13 (0.52)	3.24 (0.50)$_a$	3.35 (0.46)	3.35 (0.52)
Accommodators	3.10 (0.51)	3.21 (0.45)	3.33 (0.45)	3.43 (0.45)
Resisters	3.08 (0.50)	3.13 (0.50)$_a$	3.30 (0.45)	3.41 (0.42)
		Hours spent on academic activities		
Overall	47.48 (19.63)	42.74 (18.14)	40.56 (17.85)	
Assimilators	46.62 (19.66)	42.18 (19.18)	38.62 (17.85)	
Accommodators	47.53 (18.68)	41.05 (16.47)	40.45 (17.21)	
Resisters	47.97 (20.32)	44.31 (18.59)	41.86 (18.27)	
		Hours spent on extracurricular activities		
Overall	11.47 (11.07)	9.11 (10.36)	10.43 (11.05)	
Assimilators	12.16 (11.41)	9.88 (9.74)	9.22 (9.63)	
Accommodators	10.56 (10.18)	9.37 (12.27)	10.58 (12.16)	
Resisters	11.73 (11.49)	8.47 (9.12)	11.07 (10.98)	

Note. Outcome means that share subscripts within columns denote significant within-time differences between profiles at $p < .05$.

Table 2
Hierarchical Linear Models of Academic Performance Between Freshman and Senior Years in College

Parameter	Estimate	*SE*
Intercept (assimilation)	3.10	0.05***
Accommodation	−0.04	0.04
Resistance	−0.04	0.04
Female	0.07	0.03*
Immigrant parent	−0.02	0.04
Family income	0.06	0.03+
Public assistance	−0.06	0.05
First-generation college	−0.16	0.04***
High school GPA	0.48	0.05***
Mexican heritage	−0.02	0.04
Puerto Rican heritage	−0.04	0.05
Central American heritage	0.18	0.08*
South American heritage	0.12	0.05*
Dominican heritage	0.08	0.09
Cuban heritage	0.08	0.08
Linear slope (assimilation)	0.05	0.02*
Accommodation	0.03	0.02+
Resistance	0.02	0.02
Female	0.03	0.01*
Immigrant parent	0.00	0.02
Family income	0.00	0.01
Public assistance	−0.01	0.02
First-generation college	0.01	0.02
High school GPA	−0.04	0.02+
Mexican heritage	0.01	0.02
Puerto Rican heritage	0.03	0.02
Central American heritage	−0.04	0.03
South American heritage	−0.02	0.02
Dominican heritage	−0.04	0.04
Cuban heritage	−0.02	0.03
Between-individuals variance	0.08	0.01***
AIC unconditional model	3,053.61	
AIC hypothesized model	2,995.77	

Note. AIC = Akaike information criterion.
+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2). In addition, being a first-generation college student was associated with having a lower freshman GPA. Students' minority status profile during the fall of freshman year was not significantly associated with freshman GPA. When we adjusted for the associations of background variables on the changes in GPA, however, the longitudinal components of the model show that students' type of minority status profile predicted changes in GPA over time. Specifically, the slope representing the increase in GPA for students in the accommodation profile was steeper than that for students in the assimilation profile (the comparison group; $p = .051$). However, the coefficient representing the linear change in GPA for students in the resistance profile was not significantly different from that of the assimilation profile. In additional analyses alternating the comparison group (not shown), the slopes for each profile were found to significantly differ from zero, and the slopes for accommodation and resistance were not found to differ significantly from each other.

Academic engagement. The unconditional model for hours spent on academic engagement revealed that in the spring of freshman year, students spent an average of approximately 47.22 hr per week engaged in academic activities and their time spent on such activities significantly decreased by approximately 3.55 hr per year ($SE = 0.41$, $p < .001$) between freshman and junior years. Adding the hypothesized predictors substantially improved the fit of the model (AIC decrease = 313.56). In the hypothesized model, there were no significant differences in academic engagement in freshman year by profile membership (see Table 3). Indeed, the only significant predictors of initial time spent on academics were high school GPA and having Dominican heritage, both in the positive direction. In addition, students' minority status profile was not differentially associated with the linear decrease of time spent on academic activities between freshman and junior years. That is, the linear slope for students in each profile significantly differed from zero, however, the coefficients representing differences in slope between the minority status profiles were not significant.

Extracurricular engagement. For time spent on extracurricular activities, the unconditional model shows that, on average, students spent 11.46 hr per week engaged in leadership, campus organizations, and volunteerism during the spring of their freshman year. In addition, the linear and quadratic slopes were significant, suggesting that for some students, there was a decrease ($\gamma = -4.06$, $SE = 0.80$, $p < .001$) over their first 3 years in college. The significant quadratic slope indicates that this decrease was followed by an increase ($\gamma = 1.76$, $SE = 0.39$,

Table 3
Hierarchical Linear Models of Time Spent on Academic Activities Between Freshman and Junior Years in College

Parameter	Estimate	*SE*
Intercept (assimilation)	44.95	2.05***
Accommodation	−0.61	1.64
Resistance	0.44	1.56
Female	0.85	1.26
Immigrant parent	1.74	1.42
Family income	−2.24	1.40
Public assistance	−0.09	1.89
First-generation college	2.76	1.48+
High school GPA	11.43	1.95***
Mexican heritage	1.25	1.62
Puerto Rican heritage	1.86	2.19
Central American heritage	−3.75	3.07
South American heritage	−0.44	1.98
Dominican heritage	9.28	3.78*
Cuban heritage	1.00	3.10
Linear slope (assimilation)	−4.18	1.36**
Accommodation	0.68	1.08
Resistance	1.04	1.02
Female	−0.01	0.84
Immigrant parent	−0.13	0.94
Family income	0.55	0.93
Public assistance	−0.42	1.26
First-generation college	0.78	0.98
High school GPA	−4.13	1.30**
Mexican heritage	−0.37	1.08
Puerto Rican heritage	0.25	1.44
Central American heritage	0.07	2.08
South American heritage	0.26	1.29
Dominican heritage	−3.90	2.55
Cuban heritage	−2.79	2.03
Between-individuals variance	77.91	18.16***
AIC unconditional model	19,848.42	
AIC hypothesized model	19,534.86	

Note. AIC = Akaike information criterion.
+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Hierarchical Linear Models of Time Spent on Extracurricular Activities Between Freshman and Junior Years in College

Parameter	Estimate	*SE*
Intercept (assimilation)	14.19	1.25***
Accommodation	−1.84	1.00+
Resistance	−0.58	0.95
Female	−2.29	0.77**
Immigrant parent	−0.26	0.86
Family income	−0.31	0.86
Public assistance	0.95	1.15
First-generation college	1.40	0.90
High school GPA	1.02	1.19
Mexican heritage	−0.44	0.99
Puerto Rican heritage	0.18	1.33
Central American heritage	−2.83	1.89
South American heritage	−1.94	1.21
Dominican heritage	−3.90	2.30+
Cuban heritage	−3.85	1.88*
Linear slope (assimilation)	−5.55	2.66*
Accommodation	0.94	2.14
Resistance	−3.35	2.03+
Female	4.26	1.64**
Immigrant parent	1.39	1.84
Family income	−0.71	1.82
Public assistance	−0.58	2.47
First-generation college	−4.04	1.94*
High school GPA	1.10	2.56
Mexican heritage	1.97	2.11
Puerto Rican heritage	−4.69	2.86
Central American heritage	−2.05	3.97
South American heritage	2.94	2.57
Dominican heritage	10.05	4.89*
Cuban heritage	1.14	4.09
Quadratic slope (assimilation)	2.02	1.29
Accommodation	0.38	1.04
Resistance	2.33	0.98*
Female	−2.18	0.79**
Immigrant parent	−0.58	0.89
Family income	0.48	0.88
Public assistance	−0.21	1.20
First-generation college	1.54	0.94
High school GPA	−1.52	1.24
Mexican heritage	−0.83	1.02
Puerto Rican heritage	2.20	1.39
Central American heritage	1.82	1.94
South American heritage	−1.64	1.24
Dominican heritage	−5.08	2.39*
Cuban heritage	0.35	1.98
Between-individuals variance	26.25	5.53***
AIC unconditional model	17,419.54	
AIC hypothesized model	17,146.01	

Note. AIC = Akaike information criterion.
+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

$p < .001$) in the amount of time they spent on extracurricular activities between sophomore and junior years. The addition of hypothesized predictor and control variables substantially improved the fit of the model (AIC decrease = 273.53). In the hypothesized model, there was a trend that suggests that as freshmen, students in the accommodation profile spent less time engaged in extracurricular activities than those in the assimilation and resistance profiles (see Table 4). Between freshman and junior years, students in all three profiles reported a steep decrease in extracurricular time use; the predicted linear slope for accommodators was not significantly different from that of assimilators. In contrast, there was a different pattern of extracurricular time use among students in the resistance profile. Initially, there was a trend for students in the resistance profile to report a slightly steeper decrease than those in the assimilation profile in time spent involved in extracurricular activities between freshman and sophomore years; however, the significant quadratic effect for this group suggests that they reported a sharp increase in such involvement between sophomore and junior years.

Discussion

Increasingly, researchers, educators, and policymakers are turning their attention to the social and academic integration of young Latinos in the United States—most of whom are from immigrant families. The present study took a developmental approach to understanding how Latino students at elite colleges and universities in the United States adapt during the transition into young adulthood. Taking advantage of the longitudinal structure of data from the NLSF, we developed hypotheses about the transition to college among Latino students that emphasized that students may undergo a reevaluation of their beliefs and perceptions during the transition to college. First, we argued that not all Latino students enter elite, predominantly White colleges with the same minority status orientation but that they adopt one of various profiles—in this case, assimilation, accommodation, and resistance. Importantly, we demonstrated that these orientations matter for college engagement, above and beyond generation status and national origin, among individuals as they make the transition from high school to college.

In discussing our results, we call attention first to the nature of the minority status orientation profiles. To our knowledge, no research has examined similar ideologies or ideological profiles among Latino adolescents or young adults. Typically, Latinos' minority status orientations are inferred from indicators of acculturation such as acculturation attitudes as well as language use and bilingualism, residential patterns and segregation, rates of interethnic and interracial marriage, and even educational attainment itself (e.g., Alba & Nee, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). It is important to note that while there is little psychological theory about minority ideology that is based on empirical work with Latinos, we can draw from Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous's (1998) concept of racial ideology (based on work with Black Americans) to better understand assimilators, accommodators, and resisters. The minority status profiles reflect to various extents what Sellers and colleagues refer to as *assimilation* and *oppressed minority* ideologies: the former emphasizes the importance of working within the mainstream to attain success, and the latter emphasizes the value of building coalitions across various minority groups that may share a common experience of marginalization or injustice. The items used to assess perceived minority status referred to Blacks and Asians as well as Latinos; therefore, students in the resistance profile likely have a type of ethnic–racial identity that takes into greater account the experiences of other minority groups. Responses to questions about non-Latino groups also likely reflect the extent and types of students' precollege contact with other ethnic and racial minority groups. Indeed, resisters were more likely and assimilators were less likely to

attend schools that were predominantly Black and Latino prior to starting college (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008).

With regard to college engagement outcomes, we found interesting differences between assimilators and nonassimilators. The assimilation group—those least likely to report systemic future discrimination—consistently performed well academically while decreasing the time spent in activities such as volunteering and campus organizations. We also know that assimilators were more likely to have at least one college-educated parent (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2008). Considered together, assimilators' trajectories appear consistent with much qualitative and historical research that refers to *straight-line* assimilation whereby immigrants and children of immigrants who endorse the American (i.e., egalitarian, colorblind) logic of opportunity and who come from families with greater human capital will experience a smooth integration into the mainstream in terms of educational attainment (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

In grades earned, assimilators had somewhat different trajectories from accommodators, whose belief that minorities need to try harder to overcome discrimination can be thought of as an indication of selective acculturation to American culture (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Sears et al., 2003). Accommodators' grades increased slightly more rapidly than assimilators over time. Although this difference is not large enough in substantive terms to claim that assimilators are underachieving, it does appear that accommodators hold a slight edge in academic performance relative to the assimilators. It could be that accommodators are more strategic at navigating the structures of academic support, such as seeking help from professors and librarians or studying with peers, thus building networks and gaining a slight edge on grades earned—this is a question that merits further investigation. Another possibility is that academic success had different meaning for assimilators vis-à-vis accommodators. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) have shown that another indicator of selective acculturation (e.g., fluent bilingualism) is associated with higher self-esteem and educational aspirations in the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study of second-generation adolescents. As they have argued, for some children of immigrants, the social mobility "race is won *by*" the second-generation students themselves, such as accommodators who believe their effort will be ultimately rewarded (p. 283). For others, the "race is won *for*" them in a sense by the advantages they incur from parents (e.g., such as assimilators whose parents have greater human capital; p. 283). In a sense, accommodators' academic trajectory is consistent with the conception of them as optimistic in the face of potential difficulties and of working twice as hard (i.e., spending time not only on academics but extracurricular campus engagement) to match the academic performance of others who began with greater educational advantages (i.e., assimilators).

We also theorized that accommodators and resisters can negotiate perceived minority status in different ways. Much recent research takes umbrage at the argument emanating from oppositional culture theory that high-achieving minorities must become raceless or colorblind to succeed. Of our three profiles, both accommodators and resisters perceived racial inequality, whereas only the assimilators held a colorblind orientation. We compared the two more race-conscious groups' academic achievement as well as time spent on academic and extracurricular activities. Importantly, accommodators and resisters did not differ from each other in terms of grades earned or time spent studying. Thus, in academic terms, members of these two profiles exhibited similar trajectories, both of which we consider to be adaptive. The primary difference between accommodators and resisters emerges when one looks at academically relevant activities outside the classroom, specifically time spent volunteering and participating in organized campus activities. Although all three groups spent less time on extracurriculars from their freshman to sophomore years, the resisters recuperated their time spent on extracurriculars from sophomore to junior years so that they spent ultimately more time per week on such activities than their counterparts. Consistent with Hurtado and Carter (1997), we believe this means that the most race-conscious Latino students do not disengage from their campus environment but rather seek out opportunities to build supportive social networks. Although we lack detailed information about whether or not this time was spent with other Latinos, it is likely the case that at least some of this involvement would take place in ethnic activities or organizations. At the very least, it suggests a desire to practice social responsibility in their proximal contexts. In previous research about the political socialization of diverse adolescents whose ages overlap with those of the present study, youth who believed that social problems are rooted in societal vis-à-vis individual causes were more likely to have received messages about the value of compassion and social responsibility from their parents (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). Perhaps resisters have been socialized to negotiate minority status in ways that compelled them to engage in socially responsible ways on campus (see also Rivas-Drake, 2008).

When researchers explore the achievement of Latino students, the first two groups—assimilators and accommodators—are often presumed to be the most prevalent or the best adapted. Resisters, if oppositional culture theory were applicable, would not have gained entry into the kinds of universities included in the present study. Thus, it would have seemed counterintuitive to refer to high-achieving Latinos at elite colleges as resisters. Nonetheless, we used this term to call attention to how some Latinos resist pressure from the mainstream to drop their ethnic minority affiliations or orientations. The high-achieving resisters in the NLSF sample are not likely struggling against peer pressure not to perform well academically, and indeed they do perform well academically. However, after gaining entry to predominantly White institutions where the ideology of individual meritocracy prevails, they are quite likely to encounter tensions with, perhaps even pressure from, nonminority students—and, as we have seen—some Latinos to adopt a more colorblind or raceless ideology. Our results suggest that they may resist following a predetermined, uniform path of integration at college and instead choose to use their time to build clubs and volunteer in ways that are likely consistent with their worldviews. In fact, their orientations may compel them to find ways to manage these multiple academic and social aspects of the college environment in response to perceived future discrimination.

Limitations and Future Directions

In this study, we built on previous work that identified three distinct minority status profiles—which we call assimilation, accommodation, and resistance—among Latino students in the NLSF. A particular strength of this research is that it bridges

person-oriented (i.e., cluster) and longitudinal analytical approaches by examining how individual membership in these profiles predicted multiple forms of engagement over the course of students' college years. Nevertheless, there are several limitations that must be considered alongside the present findings. First, the Latino students in the present study, although diverse in terms of the national origins and socioeconomic backgrounds, attend very selective colleges and universities. It would be useful and necessary to examine whether there are similar relationships of minority status profiles with academic and extracurricular engagement over time among Latinos at less selective colleges and universities. Building a body of knowledge such as this will help determine the generalizability of our study to the experiences of Latinos in higher education.

A second issue regards the fact that minority status beliefs and perceptions at the start of college may reflect different precollege trajectories of opportunity. It will be necessary to continue examining whether and how adolescent resisters, accommodators, and assimilators in other studies differentially engage with school in ways that promote their participation in higher education. Moreover, minority status orientations are likely to change during the college years. The NLSF includes similar items at Wave 5 as those used to create the initial profiles (at Wave 1). Accordingly, it is our goal to examine change in perceived minority status profile membership using these data in future research. A recent study (Sears et al., 2003) suggests that ethnic activism, encountering discrimination against Latinos specifically as well as perceiving that minorities more generally are treated unfairly, and concern with improving the social status of Latinos are associated with a stronger sense of ethnic identity during the senior year of college, and that students in their senior year were more likely to self-identify with politicized panethnic identities than they were as freshmen (see also Rivas-Drake, 2008). We also believe that multiple methods might be necessary to provide a more complete picture of why and how changes come about in students' perceived minority status over time. For example, it would be useful to have observational as well as contextual data about the nature of students' experiences around ethnicity and race in particular settings within colleges and universities. Previous ethnographic research suggests there are nuances in students' experiences around ethnicity and race that could be overlooked by relying only on self-report measures that paint broad strokes of the overall picture (e.g., Lewis et al., 2000). Such information is needed, as experiences associated with changes in students' perceived minority status might be relevant for long-term outcomes such as occupational choice, political participation, and civic or community engagement after college.

Conclusion

The present findings extend the conversation about the role of minority status in the normative development of ethnic minority young people. Our results are consistent with a growing literature across several disciplines that questions some of the assumptions of oppositional culture. Such scholars have suggested that among high-achieving ethnic minority students, adopting an orientation that questions the egalitarianism of the U.S. opportunity structure may motivate them to pursue academic goals in spite of perceived systemic discrimination. Indeed, in the present study, resisters' grades increased at a similar rate to their peers for whom systemic discrimination was less salient or not at all salient. As Latinos increasingly engage mainstream routes to upward social mobility, it is essential to chronicle how they have successfully navigated ethnic experiences in order to identify diverse ways of promoting other Latinos' equitable participation in such routes.

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