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Extended Family Integration Among Euro and Mexican Americans: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class

This article compares the extended family integration of Euro and Mexican American women and men and assesses the importance of class and culture in explaining ethnic differences. Using National Survey of Families and Households II data (N = 7,929), we find that ethnic differences depend on the dimension of integration. Mexican Americans exhibit higher rates of kin coresidence and proximity, but lower rates of financial support than Euro Americans. Two additional differences exist only among women: Mexican American women are more likely than Euro American women to give household or child care help. As to the explanation for these differences, social class is the key factor; cultural variables have little effect. Our findings support a theoretical framework attending to intersections among ethnicity, gender, and class.

Feminist scholars who first developed the intersectional framework pointed out the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class inequalities

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(Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). Their primary concern was bringing race/ethnicity and class to the center of gender studies. We argue that it is equally important to introduce gender and class into race/ethnicity studies (Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006a). In this article, we demonstrate the importance of such an intersectional approach to race/ethnicity by focusing on Mexican American extended families in the United States and comparing them to those of Euro Americans.

The article addresses a contemporary debate concerning racial/ethnic differences in extended family life: the superintegration versus disintegration debate (Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004b) as it pertains to Mexican Americans. On one side are those who argue that Latino/a families in general, and Mexican American families in particular, are more integrated than those of Euro Americans. They suggest Latinos/as live near kin, stay in touch, provide many types of assistance, and often put the needs of their extended families before their own (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Mirandé, 1997). On the other side are those who argue that Latino/a extended families are less likely to provide care and support to kin than Euro American families (Menjivar, 2000; Roschelle, 1997).

Notably, despite the highly gendered nature of family life, most studies that could potentially shed light on this debate examine ethnic differences in family integration without separating women and men. Challenging this approach and following the intersectional framework, we examine ethnic differences in family integration separately for women and men.

Further, whereas this debate primarily focuses on the direction of difference between Mexican and Euro Americans, recently scholars have begun to argue for the need to move beyond mere description of variation to an examination of those social conditions, both cultural and socio-economic, that explain differences in extended families (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000). The role of social class is especially important in these discussions, with scholars asking whether ethnic differences in family integration can be attributed to social class or whether cultural differences are responsible for these differences in integration.

Using data from Wave II of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), this article first describes the differences in extended family integration between Mexican Americans and Euro Americans and, second, investigates the social conditions that explain these differences using a conceptual framework that takes into account both culture and social class. More specifically, we explain ethnic differences in family integration using measures of cultural variation, including familism, religious involvement, and gender ideology, and indicators of social class standing, including income, education, and employment.

Following much literature on extended families, we define extended family as any relatives other than spouse or minor children (this definition considers adult children aged 19 or older as extended kin). Whereas most literature focuses on one indicator of family integration at a time, we conceptualize extended family integration as a multidimensional construct, including three broad components: proximity, contact, and kin support.

FAMILY INTEGRATION: COMPARING MEXICAN AMERICANS AND EURO AMERICANS

In summarizing existing literature regarding the relative levels of family integration for Mexican Americans and Euro Americans, it is useful to look separately at the three broad components identified above: kin proximity, contact with kin, and kin support. Because many studies use "Hispanic" or "Latino/a" categories, but their samples typically consist mostly of Mexican Americans, we include such studies in this review.

Studies of proximity tend to find greater extended kin integration among Mexican Americans than among Euro Americans. Many of these studies focused on coresidence and found that Latinos/as were more likely than Euro Americans

to live with all sorts of extended kin (e.g., Angel & Tienda, 1982; Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Kamo, 2000). Most of these studies of coresidence combined men and women; a few others focused on women only (Burr & Mutchler, 1992; De Vos & Arias, 2003). Szinovacz (1997) separated women and men and found no differences between Latinos/as and Euro Americans in either group. Whereas numerous scholars explored ethnic differences in coresidence, few examined another important indicator of proximity, living near kin. Those who did, however, found Mexican Americans more likely than Euro Americans to live near kin (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Mindel, 1980). These studies did not separate respondents by gender.

In terms of contact with kin, most research found that Mexican Americans had more contact with extended kin, both by face-to-face (Freeberg & Stein, 1996; Schweizer, Schnegg, & Berzborn, 1998) and by phone (Valenzuela & Dornbush, 1994), than Euro Americans. A few scholars disagreed, however, reporting either no ethnic difference or a higher prevalence of kin contact among Euro Americans, in person (Keefe & Padilla, 1987) or by phone (Eisenberg, 1988). This literature also pays little attention to gender. In one exception, Valenzuela and Dornbush found that ethnic differences among male adolescents were similar to those among female adolescents.

Although different typologies of kin support exist in the literature, most of them distinguish three main types: financial support in the form of goods or money; emotional support through love, comfort, and advice; and practical support, which includes helping with a variety of instrumental tasks (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Fischer, Sollie, Sorell, & Green, 1989). Many studies have examined ethnic differences in some of these types of kin support; their findings did not consistently point to greater integration on the part of either Mexican Americans or Euro Americans. The majority of studies examining financial assistance found that Latinos/as were less likely than Euro Americans to provide it to kin (Eggebeen, 1992; Lee & Aytac, 1998; Spreitzer, Schoeni, & Rao, 1996). And although some scholars found that Latinos/as were less likely to provide emotional support (Spreitzer et al.), others found no ethnic difference (Eggebeen) or even a higher prevalence among Mexican Americans (Mindel, 1980). None of these analyses of financial or emotional support separated women and men.

For practical support, the findings are also inconsistent. Some scholars found Mexican

Americans more likely than Euro Americans to be involved in transfers of practical support (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Mindel, 1980). Others found that Mexican Americans were less likely to provide help with transportation or household tasks than Euro Americans (Roschelle, 1997), or that Latinos/as and Euro Americans did not differ (Eggebeen, 1992). Whereas most combined women and men, Roschelle's analysis examined the ethnic difference in household help specifically among men. Unlike the studies of help with transportation and household tasks, those examining child care mostly focused on women and found Mexican Americans more involved in child care help than Euro Americans (Becerra & Chi, 1992; Roschelle; Uttal, 1999). In contrast, Eggebeen looked at women and men combined and found that Latinos/as and Euro Americans were equally likely to give child care help.

Overall, findings of prior research appear to vary both across and within different measures of family integration. We attribute such inconsistent results primarily to four differences among these studies: the measure of integration used, the ethnic groups examined (e.g., Mexican Americans only, Latinos/as as a group), the populations studied (e.g., elderly women, single mothers), and the methodologies used (e.g., type of sample, definitions of variables, use of controls, methods of analysis). Another possible reason for inconsistencies is that studies often combine women and men, despite the demonstrated effect of gender on involvement in family networks (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004a; Walker, 1992).

EXPLAINING ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY INTEGRATION

Turning to explanations for the differences in extended family integration between Mexican Americans and Euro Americans, we find that scholars tend to focus on either culture or social class. For both, the empirical research that examined these explanations is replete with inconsistencies.

Culture

Superintegration scholars often attribute the distinctiveness of Mexican American families to culture. They identify three characteristics as possible explanations for extended family integration: familism, religious involvement, and gender ideology. First, the most commonly mentioned cultural trait is familism: Compared to Euro Americans, research suggests, Mexican Americans want to live closer to kin and place a higher value on the provision of support among family members (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Mindel, 1980). Few studies, however, have examined the influence of familism on extended family integration. Those who did so used extended familism questions from NSFHI, finding no effect of such values on kin support (Roschelle, 1997) but a positive effect on coresidence (Burr & Mutchler, 1999). Second, some found that Mexican Americans and Euro Americans differed with respect to their religious involvement (e.g., Hunt, 2000). Religion not only provides the opportunity to stay in touch with family members by attending church together but also can be a source of moral values about respecting, obeying, and taking care of kin. Third, also widely cited as distinctive to Mexican Americans is the cultural ideal of male dominance, denoted by machismo, and female submissiveness, implied in the term marianismo (Mirandé, 1997; Roschelle). Scholars have tended to discuss the effects of such a cultural ideal on nuclear but not extended families. We theorize that this purported cultural ideal may shape extended family integration, and that it may do so in distinct ways for women and men.

Social Class

A number of scholars stress social class as the key to understanding the distinctiveness of Latino/a families. Mexican Americans have less education and income than Euro Americans (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000). The superintegration proponents trace high kin integration to this economic deprivation, arguing it increases the need for resources that kin can provide and reduces opportunities to migrate away from kin (Baca Zinn & Wells). In contrast, the disintegration proponents argue that economic deprivation leads to the deterioration of Latino/a kin networks, as it severely limits the resources, such as time and money, that can be shared with kin (Menjivar, 2000; Roschelle, 1997).

Some empirical research has examined whether ethnic differences in family integration are linked to socioeconomic differences between Latinos/as and Euro Americans. The findings of this research are inconsistent. Some studies found that the differences between Latinos/as and Euro

Americans in familial integration diminished when SES (socioeconomic status) variables were in the model, but nevertheless remained statistically significant (Angel & Tienda, 1982; Burr & Mutchler, 1992; Eggebeen, 1992; Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993). One study even reported that the ethnic difference actually increased with the inclusion of controls for SES (Lee & Aytac, 1998). In contrast, other studies found that ethnic difference became insignificant when SES was taken into account (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Lee & Aytac; Spreitzer et al., 1996). Much of this research examined women and men together; many studies also combined Mexican Americans with other Latinos/as. Most studies focused only on coresidence or kin support, and used income and education as measures of SES; few studies examined employment status. In addition, these studies differ widely in terms of their use of controls and methods of analysis.

CONTROLS

A few other factors may also play an important role in shaping ethnic differences in family integration. First, because family involvement changes across the life course, age is an important control used in most studies of extended family integration. Second, nuclear family structure might shape extended family integration, although scholars disagree about its effects. Some argue that having a spouse/partner (Fischer et al., 1989) or children (Ambert, 1992; Gallagher & Gerstel, 2001) increases an individual's familial network and extended family integration. In contrast, others argue that marriage (Coser & Coser, 1974; Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006b) and children (Moore, 1990) take away time and resources that might otherwise be spent on interactions with extended kin. Third, the composition of Euro and Mexican American extended families probably also shapes ethnic differences: Having more relatives provides greater opportunity for sharing a residence, living nearby, staying in touch, and exchanging support (Roschelle, 1997).

Finally, some have argued that when modeling family integration, researchers should control for the degree of assimilation, or more specifically, its proxies: length of stay in the United States and English language proficiency (Kamo, 2000; Roschelle, 1997). In earlier research using the same data, we examined proxies of assimilation, including an indicator of whether the interview was conducted in Spanish as well as a variable

that measures the proportion of life a respondent lived in the United States, and demonstrated that these proxies of assimilation did not contribute to ethnic differences in extended family integration (Sarkisian et al., 2006). Further, there is little variation on these variables among Euro Americans, precluding the use of these variables in our analyses that require separate regression models for Euro Americans and Mexican Americans (i.e., regression decomposition analyses).

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Theoretical disagreements about extended family integration among Mexican Americans and Euro Americans and the factors shaping this integration are intensified by (a) a lack of studies using national data to examine and explain the differences in extended family integration, (b) the tendency of some studies to combine Mexican Americans with other Latino/a groups, (c) the tendency to examine one aspect of family integration rather than a range of indicators, (d) the tendency to combine women and men, and (e) a lack of systematic evaluation of the role of both social class and cultural factors in shaping ethnic differences.

To avoid the limitations of prior literature, this article addresses the superintegration versus disintegration debate by using data from a nationally representative sample of Euro Americans and Mexican Americans. We examine women and men separately and use multiple indicators of family integration. In contrast to much prior research, we systematically assess the extent to which social class and culture explain ethnic differences in extended family integration by employing regression decomposition.

METHOD

Data

We used data from the second wave (1992 – 1994) of the National Survey of Families and Households, in which a total of 10,005 main respondents were interviewed (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996). The data were collected from a stratified, multistage area probability U.S. sample of adults, which included an oversampling of Mexican Americans. The Wave I sample ($N = 13,007$) was selected in 1987 – 1988, with a response rate of 75%. At the time of the second wave, 763 (5.9%) respondents were deceased, another

771 respondents were not located (tracing success rate of 93.7%), and another 1,468 people were lost because of nonresponse (Wave II response rate was 87.2%). Analytic weights were constructed to adjust for this attrition as well as for the oversampling. In this article, we focused on a Wave II subsample that includes Euro Americans ($n = 7,482$) and Mexican Americans ($n = 447$).

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables covered three main domains of family integration: proximity to kin, contact with kin, and kin support. Our measure of coresidence with kin was a dichotomy indicating whether the respondent coresided with any extended kin (including parents, adult children aged 19 or older, siblings, and other relatives). Our measure of living near kin indicated whether the closest noncoresident kin (includes parents, parents-in-law, adult children, and siblings) lived within 2 miles of the respondent. We created this dichotomy on the basis of the frequency distribution as well as Roschelle's (1997) categories because the continuous proximity variable was highly skewed (with a mean of 112 miles and a median of only 5 miles).

Next, we included two measures of contact. The respondents were asked how often there had been (a) contact in person and (b) contact by phone or letter in the past 12 months with each of the following types of relatives not living in the same household: mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, adult children, or grandchildren. Respondents could select never, about once a year, several times a year, one to three times a month, about once a week, or more than once a week. When a respondent did not have a particular type of kin, responses were coded as *never* to be consistent with other measures of family integration that are also contingent on the availability of kin. (Note, however, that our multivariate analyses controlled for such availability.) To keep the analyses uniform across the three components of family integration and to simplify the presentation of the results, we generated two dichotomous variables, one for each type of contact, indicating frequent (at least once a week) contact with at least one type of kin.

To examine the full spectrum of support, we used measures of each of the three major types of kin support identified in the literature (Fischer et al., 1989): financial, emotional, and practical.

We included (a) two measures of financial support (gift or loan over $200, and help paying living and educational expenses), (b) one measure of emotional support (advice, encouragement, moral, or emotional support), and (c) three measures of practical support (help with transportation; help with housework, yardwork, car repairs, and other work around the house; and help with baby sitting or child care). All measures were dichotomous indicators of whether the respondent has provided such support to kin, as no information on the amount of time spent on these was available. Further, as was the case for contact with kin, these data were only available for noncoresident kin.

The giving gifts or loans variable reflected whether the respondent or spouse gave a gift or loan worth more than $200 at any one time to any noncoresident individual, and if so, to whom they gave the largest amount (asked separately for gifts and loans). If a relative was named as the recipient of either of these items, we coded the respondent as giving gifts or loans to kin. The second measure of financial assistance, help paying day-to-day living or educational expenses, complemented the first as it included smaller scale financial transfers. For this variable, the survey questions were posed in the same way as the questions concerning gifts and loans. Finally, emotional support, help with transportation, household help, and help with child care variables used the questions asking whether respondents gave each of those types of support in the last month to (a) parents/children, (b) siblings, and (c) other relatives. These three categories were combined to generate dichotomous indicators of giving each type of support to any kin.

Independent Variables

Our measure of ethnicity was a dichotomous variable coded 1 for respondents who stated that they are *Mexican American, Chicano, or Mexicano*, and 0 for those who identified as *Euro American, not of Hispanic origin*. In addition to ethnicity, we included three sets of independent variables: cultural measures, social class measures, and controls.

To assess the cultural factors, we used measures of gender traditionalism, familism, and religious involvement. For gender traditionalism, we used a scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .68$) reflecting respondent's agreement (on a 5-point scale) with two statements: (a) it is much better for everyone

if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family and (b) preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed, as well as respondent's disagreement (also on a 5-point scale) with two statements: (a) it is all right for mothers to work full time when their youngest child is younger than 5 years and (b) both the husband and wife should contribute to family income. For extended familism, we created a scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .62$) using five variables indicating agreement (on a 5-point scale) with the following statements: (a) parents ought to provide financial help to their adult children when the children are having financial difficulty, (b) parents ought to let their adult children live with them when the children are having problems, (c) children ought to provide financial help to aging parents when their parents are having financial difficulty, (d) children ought to let aging parents live with them when the parents can no longer live by themselves, and (e) parents ought to help their children with college expenses. To measure respondent's religious involvement, we used a measure of church attendance, a dichotomy that indicated whether the respondent attended religious services at least once a year. We also examined separately moderate church attendance (1 – 49 times a year) and frequent church attendance (50+ times a year), but the findings were the same for these two variables; therefore, for simplicity, we combined them.

To account for socioeconomic status, we used income, education, and employment status. Income was operationalized as the total household income per person (income of all household members divided by the household size) in the past year, measured in $10,000s. We used income per capita because such a measure reflects the socioeconomic standing of the entire household. We topcoded income at $100,000 and used the square root to improve its distributional properties. Our education variable indicated the number of years of completed education. Employment status was a dichotomy indicating whether the respondent worked for pay at the time of the interview.

Finally, we used a number of variables as controls. First, we included respondent's age in full years (mean centered), as well as age squared to control for potential curvilinear relationships between age and family integration. The age-squared variable was divided by 100 to simplify the presentation of the coefficients. Second, we used measures of respondent's nuclear family structure. For marital status, we used a dichotomy indicating whether the respondent is unpartnered, that is, not married and not cohabiting. For parental status, we also used a dichotomous variable to indicate whether the respondent had own or spouse/partner's minor children (i.e., biological, adopted, or foster younger than 19 years) in the household. Third, we controlled for extended family composition: having living parents, number of siblings, having adult children, and having grandchildren. The living parents variable indicated whether at least one of the respondent's own parents was still living. Number of siblings variable reflected the number of respondent's siblings (full, half, and stepsiblings), transformed using natural logarithm to improve its distributional properties. The presence of adult children variable indicated whether the respondent had any children (biological, adopted, or foster) older than 18 years residing in or out of the household. Finally, the grandchildren variable indicated whether the respondent had grandchildren, that is, if the respondent's or spouse/partner's children had children.

Analytic Strategy

Our analysis consisted of two parts. The first part entailed bivariate analyses that assessed the differences between Mexican Americans and Euro Americans, separately for men and for women, in family integration measures as well as the independent variables. For each of the variables, we calculated weighted means and performed significance tests for the differences between ethnic groups. The second part entailed two sets of multivariate analyses: (a) a set of logistic regression models to assess whether class, culture, and control variables jointly explained the differences between Mexican Americans' and Euro Americans' extended family integration, as well as to test the significance of gender differences in these explanations, and (b) a set of regression decomposition analyses to identify the relative contribution of class and culture to explaining ethnic differences.

The set of logistic regression models contained two types: first, those including the ethnicity variable only and second, those including the full set of predictors. By examining the changes in the ethnicity variable coefficients from the first to the second type of model, we could determine whether the predictors accounted for the ethnic differences in family integration. Because the information on the values of regression coefficients in these models was not sufficient to assess

the relative contributions of the predictors to explaining ethnic differences, we employed a regression decomposition technique that combined this information with the information on the size of the ethnic differences in predictor means. We then use logistic regression coefficients to assist in the interpretation of these decomposition results.

To test whether explanatory models differ by gender, we used a technique proposed by Allison (1999) and further developed by Hoetker (2004). This technique recognizes that significance tests for the group differences in logistic regression coefficients can be misleading because of the differing amount of residual dispersion. Therefore, we conducted an overall test of model difference using a likelihood-ratio test that compares the sum of log-likelihoods (LL) of women's and men's models to the log-likelihood value for a mixed-gender model that includes a gender-specific residual dispersion parameter (δ). When we found significant differences between the models overall, we used the pattern of significance tests in each model to locate the differences. (This strategy is appropriate when the sample sizes for the two groups are roughly equivalent, as was the case for women and men here.) Because we were interested in determining whether the explanatory models for ethnic differences varied by gender, we compared significance tests when using logistic coefficients in interpreting decomposition results.

Using the regression decomposition technique, we assessed the relative contributions of predictors to generating ethnic differences. These were so-called *compositional effects*: the effects of the group differences in the means of predictors on the group difference in the dependent variable. For logistic regression, compositional effects were calculated as

$$\frac{1}{2}(b_{\text{Euro}} + b_{\text{Mexican}})(\bar{x}_{\text{Euro}} - \bar{x}_{\text{Mexican}})p(1-p),$$

where $\bar{x}_{\text{Euro}}$ and $\bar{x}_{\text{Mexican}}$ represent the means of an independent variable, b_{Euro} and b_{Mexican} represent the coefficients for that variable from separate logit models for Euro Americans and Mexican Americans, and

$$p = \frac{1}{2}(p_{\text{Mexican}} + p_{\text{Euro}})$$

is the proportion for the family integration measure (see Glick, Bean, & Van Hook, 1997, for more de-

tails on this technique). In this article, we summed the compositional effects for each group of explanatory variables and presented those sums graphically to demonstrate the relative contribution of each group of variables to explaining the ethnic gap.

To obtain generalizable results, all of our analyses (bivariate and multivariate) used analytic weights adjusting for oversampling, nonresponse, and attrition, as well as aligning selected demographic characteristics of the sample to those in the population. Our analyses also used standard error estimates adjusted for the clustered and stratified nature of the sample. Missing values of independent variables were imputed using single regression imputation relying on customized multivariate models. The total number of imputed data points constituted fewer than 1% of the total data points in the analyses, with the culture variables having a disproportionate number of missing values (approximately 3%) because they were derived from the self-administered portion of the survey. Note that for income, education, and some of the family composition controls, we relied on the constructed variables generated and imputed by NSFH staff. For consistency, we used deterministic imputation for the remaining variables as well.

RESULTS

Detecting Ethnic Differences

To begin, we used bivariate analyses to examine whether Mexican Americans differ from Euro Americans in their extended family integration. As Table 1 shows, both among women and among men, Mexican Americans are significantly more likely than Euro Americans to coreside with and to live within 2 miles of extended kin. There are no significant ethnic differences among either women or men in contact in person or by phone or letter. In terms of kin support, we found that among both women and men, Euro Americans are more likely than Mexican Americans to give gifts and loans to kin. We also found, however, that ethnic differences in kin support are not uniform by gender, as two ethnic differences exist among women only: Mexican American women are more likely than Euro American women to provide household help and child care help. Finally, we found no ethnic differences in help with transportation, emotional help, and help with paying daily and educational expenses.

The second part of Table 1 presents an assessment of the ethnic differences in the social

Table 1. *Variable Means by Ethnicity (*N = 7,929)

	Men		Women	
Variables	Euro American (*n* = 2,983)	Mexican American (*n* = 173)	Euro American (*n* = 4,499)	Mexican American (*n* = 274)
Dependent variables, %				
Proximity to kin				
Coresident kin	19.15	33.97***	21.51	42.27***
Noncoresident kin nearby	35.62	46.33*	38.81	58.36***
Contact with kin				
Frequent contact in person	59.40	68.73	67.02	73.46
Frequent contact by phone/letter	70.81	75.07	83.81	79.63
Kin support				
Gifts and loans	27.27	11.34***	26.62	13.86***
Help with expenses	9.38	8.86	11.05	10.74
Emotional support	65.60	61.44	75.82	72.68
Household maintenance help	38.07	45.91	29.28	42.81**
Transportation help	36.70	41.25	38.48	42.72
Child care help	27.80	26.76	33.53	47.12**
Independent variables				
Culture				
Gender traditionalism	0.17	0.35**	0.01	0.12
Extended familism	0.02	0.29***	−0.06	0.17***
Church attendance	0.70	0.82**	0.75	0.91***
Social class				
Income per person (square root)	1.37	0.94***	1.29	0.85***
Education	13.44	10.67***	12.84	9.76***
Employment	0.73	0.71	0.55	0.55
Controls				
Age (mean centered)	−0.48	−5.65***	1.40	−4.61***
Age squared (divided by 100)	2.59	2.62	2.96	2.01***
Unpartnered	0.22	0.25	0.33	0.36
Minor children	0.35	0.53***	0.36	0.60***
Living parents	0.67	0.75	0.63	0.69
Number of siblings (log)	1.20	1.68***	1.19	1.75***
Adult children	0.48	0.34***	0.55	0.53
Grandchildren	0.34	0.28	0.41	0.37

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

conditions—socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic—used to predict ethnic variation in family integration. In terms of cultural characteristics, Mexican American men have more traditional gender beliefs than Euro American men, but Mexican American women do not differ from Euro American women in this respect. Further, Mexican Americans on average have more familistic attitudes and are more likely to attend church than Euro Americans. Second, although there is no difference in employment rates, Mexican Americans have on average much lower income and educational attainment than Euro

Americans. Third, we found that Mexican Americans are on average younger, have more siblings, and are more likely to have minor children than Euro Americans. Finally, Mexican American men are less likely than Euro American men to have adult children (there is no such difference among women).

Explaining Ethnic Differences

We now turn to multivariate analyses that assessed the extent to which these ethnic differences in culture, socioeconomic status, and controls

help explain ethnic differences in extended family integration. Table 2 presents multivariate results for both women and men for the three measures of family integration where ethnic differences existed across gender (living with kin, living nearby, and giving gifts or loans); models of household help and child care help are presented for women only because we found no significant differences among men on these measures. We also estimated multivariate models for those extended family integration measures where no ethnic differences were observed. These models assessed whether some concealed ethnic differences would be revealed when controlling for various explanatory factors, but no significant differences between Euro Americans and Mexican Americans emerged in these models (data not shown).

The first row of coefficients in Table 2 presents the odds ratios of the ethnicity variable from the models containing only that variable. Below that are the odds ratios for the full models; these models included not only the ethnicity variable but

also all other independent variables. The last row of the table presents the results of significance testing for the differences between the models for women and men.

Comparing the ethnicity only models to the full models, we found that across almost all the measures of family integration, the joint introduction of cultural, SES, and control variables explains (i.e., removes) ethnic differences. That is, almost all ethnicity variable coefficients that were significant in the ethnicity only models were no longer significant in the full models. The only exception is coresidence: Even controlling for cultural and socioeconomic factors, Mexican American women and men are significantly more likely than Euro Americans to live with extended kin.

Comparing the explanatory models for women and men, we found that models differed significantly by gender for coresidence, living nearby, and financial help, underscoring the need to examine women and men separately. We further explored these gender differences in our regression decomposition analyses, which assessed

Table 2. *Logistic Regression Results for Family Integration Measures (N = 7,929)*

Variables	Live with kin		Nearby kin		Gifts or loans		Household help	Child care
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Women	Women
Ethnicity only model								
Mexican American	2.17***	2.67***	1.56*	2.21***	0.34***	0.44***	1.81**	1.77***
Full model								
Mexican American	2.20***	1.75**	0.91	1.15	0.56	0.79	1.17	1.36
Culture								
Gender ideology	1.06	1.15	1.12	0.95	1.16*	0.97	1.00	1.02
Extended familism	1.40**	1.47***	0.85*	1.00	1.22*	1.21**	1.16**	1.04
Church attendance	1.08	1.01	1.14	1.07	1.05	1.32*	1.25*	1.35*
Social class								
Income	0.30***	0.50***	0.86	0.80*	2.31***	3.24***	0.84	1.27**
Education	1.03	0.95*	0.89***	0.90***	1.10***	1.05*	0.96	0.99
Employment	1.48	1.27	0.93	0.82*	1.42*	0.94	0.97	0.83
Controls								
Age	0.96***	0.96***	0.98**	0.99*	1.01	1.01	0.97***	0.96***
Age squared	0.96	0.98	1.04	1.02	1.00	0.99	0.94***	0.92***
Unpartnered	2.80***	2.26***	0.70**	0.89	1.04	0.83	1.62***	0.99
Minor children	0.29***	0.41***	1.05	1.10	0.94	0.89	0.91	1.15
Living parents	1.05	1.00	1.20	1.19	0.95	1.30	1.87***	0.80
Number of siblings	1.08	1.07	1.43***	1.51***	1.28**	1.12	1.02	1.34***
Adult children	13.99***	11.35***	1.60**	1.41*	2.67***	2.89***	1.43*	0.66**
Grandchildren	0.45***	0.66***	1.38	1.79***	1.16	1.19	1.10	10.31***
n	3,156	4,773	3,156	4,773	3,138	4,756	4,610	4,631
−2LL difference	28.38**		23.59*		28.74**		—	—

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests for odds ratios, one-tailed tests with *df* = 13 for the log-likelihood (*−2LL*) difference).

the contribution of specific sets of variables to ethnic differences for women and men.

Figure 1 presents compositional effects for each set of variables. For each dependent variable, this figure includes two bars (separately for women and men). The first bar represents the size of the existing ethnic gap (percentage of Mexican Americans minus percentage of Euro Americans who reported participating in each family integration behavior). Most of these bars are upward bars because most ethnic gaps favor Mexican Americans. The only exceptions are the ethnic gaps in giving gifts or loans (for both women and men), where the gaps favor Euro Americans, represented by downward bars.

The second bar in each pair displays the amounts of this Mexican-Euro differential that can be attributed to the ethnic differences in means of each group of explanatory variables (i.e., culture, class, and controls). These amounts are represented as stacked portions of a bar to depict their joint ability to explain the corresponding ethnic gap as well as to demonstrate each group's contribution to explaining that gap. Upward portions of this bar (representing a positive number) show that the ethnic difference in means for that specific group of variables results in higher extended family involvement of Mexican Americans than of Euro Americans, increasing the Mexican-Euro differential. Downward portions of this bar (representing a negative number) show that the ethnic difference in means for that specific group of variables results in higher extended family involvement of Euro Americans than of Mexican Americans, decreasing the Mexican-Euro differential. Thus, for most ethnic gaps (those favoring Mexicans), upward bars indicate the groups of variables that help

FIGURE 1. COMPOSITIONAL EFFECTS FOR FAMILY INTEGRATION MEASURES ($N = 7,929$)
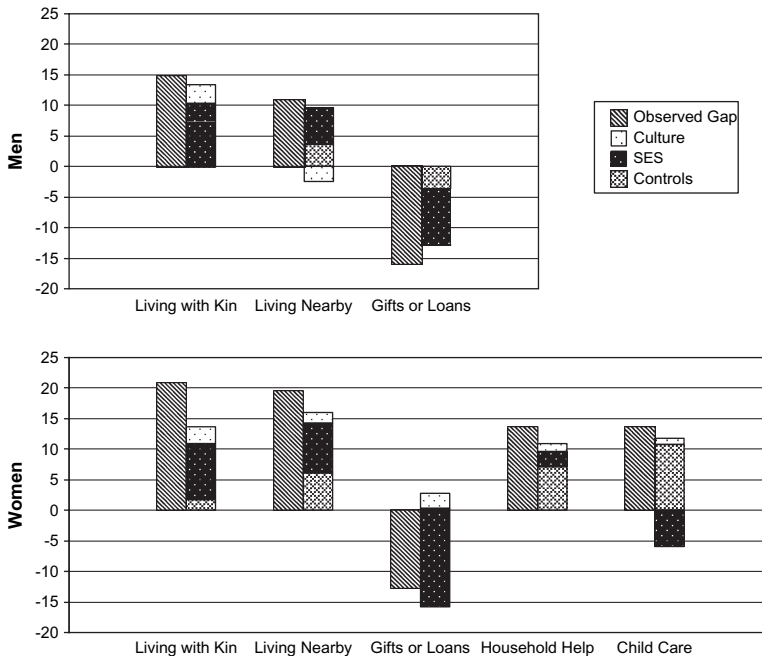
Note: The first bar in each pair represents the size of the existing Mexican-Euro differential for the corresponding measure of integration. The second bar in each pair represents compositional effects, that is, the amount of Mexican-Euro differential that can be attributed to the ethnic differences in means of explanatory variables (culture, class, and controls). Upward components of this bar show that the ethnic difference in means for a group of variables is associated with an increase in the Mexican-Euro differential; downward components show that the ethnic difference in means for a group of variables is associated with a decrease in the Mexican-Euro differential.

explain the existing ethnic gap, and downward bars indicate the groups of variables that do not help explain the existing ethnic gap; rather, these latter characteristics explain why this gap is smaller than it could have been. For ethnic gaps in gifts and loans, however, the reverse is true: Downward bars indicate the groups of variables that help explain the ethnic gap, and upward bars point to those groups of variables that keep the gap smaller than it could be.

In what follows, we discuss Figure 1 to assess the broad contributions of the three groups of variables: culture, class, and controls. To specify these contributions and pinpoint the individual variables that matter in each group, we periodically return to the findings presented in Tables 1 and 2 as well as draw on detailed regression decomposition results (data not shown; available from the authors upon request).

Examining the results for living with kin, we found that for both women and men, a large chunk of the ethnic difference in coresidence is explained by social class. Socioeconomic variables account for 10.4% of the 14.8% ethnic gap for men and 9.2% of the 20.8% ethnic gap for women. Here, it is income that contributes the most: As Table 2 showed, those with higher incomes are less likely to coreside with kin. The lower income of Mexican Americans generates a substantial ethnic gap in coresidence rates. In contrast, culture and controls contributed little to explaining the ethnic gap in coresidence. As the combined size of the bar indicates, our model accounts for a large portion of the ethnic difference: 13.4% of 14.8% difference for men and 13.7% of 20.8% for women. The remaining differences are statistically significant, however, as the ethnicity coefficients in Table 2 indicate.

For living nearby, we found that socioeconomic standing and controls explain much of the ethnic differences favoring Mexican American women and men. Here, as Table 2 shows, education and to a smaller extent income account for a substantial portion of the ethnic gaps. Higher levels of education and income are linked to a reduction in the likelihood of living near kin and staying in touch, although income has a significant effect on women's, but not men's, proximity to kin. In contrast, cultural variables do not help explain the ethnic differences for men; for women, extended familism explains 1.9% of the gap, a statistically significant, but small, contribution. When taken together, all variables account for 7.2% of the 10.7% ethnic gap for men, and

for 16.1% of the 19.6% ethnic gap for women, rendering ethnic differences in living near kin insignificant, as Table 2 indicates.

Turning to kin support, we found that for financial giving, social class is again the primary group of variables that explains the ethnic difference, as SES accounts for the entire 12.8% gap for women and for 12.8% of the 15.9% gap for men. More specifically, higher income and education are associated with a higher likelihood of giving gifts or loans over $200. Because Mexican Americans have on average lower income and education, this ethnic differential in social class explains the ethnic difference in giving financial assistance to kin. All other factors, whether culture or controls, do not contribute much to explaining this ethnic difference.

Focusing on household help among women, we found that the ethnic differences can be attributed primarily to SES and controls. More specifically, age and income stand out as explanatory factors. Higher income is associated with a decreased likelihood of household help, and because Euro American women have higher incomes than Mexican Americans, this ethnic differential in social class explains a portion of the ethnic difference in giving household help to kin. Further, we found that the likelihood of giving household help first increases, but then substantially decreases with age, and because Mexican American women are younger on average, they are more likely to give this type of help to their kin. Culture once again contributes little to explaining the ethnic difference in household help.

Finally, for child care help among women, we found that controls, more specifically, age and the number of siblings, explain the ethnic difference. Younger women and those with more siblings are more likely to give child care help, and Mexican American women, on average, are younger and have more siblings than Euro American women. Combined, controls explain 10.7% of the 14% ethnic gap in child care, rendering it insignificant.

DISCUSSION

Scholars today are once again focusing on the prominence, character, and value of extended families (Bengtson, 2001). Those who examine minority families are particularly likely to emphasize the importance of broad family ties and nonnuclear models of family life (Collins, 2000;

Roschelle, 1997). Supporting these arguments about the continuing importance of extended family ties, our findings suggest that the extended family is a viable institution for both Mexican Americans and Euro Americans but in distinctive ways.

Mexican Americans and Euro Americans are significantly different on some aspects of family integration. Our analysis, however, suggests that neither the superintegration nor the disintegration proponents fully capture the ethnic distinctions in extended family integration. Mexican American women and men are significantly more likely to live with and near kin than are Euro American men and women. These differences are dramatic: More than two thirds of Mexican Americans (67%) but one half of Euro Americans (50%) live with kin or within 2 miles. Thus, the findings on proximity support the proposition that Mexican American families are more integrated than Euro American families. In contrast to both the superintegration and the disintegration approaches, however, we found no significant differences in contact with kin. Furthermore, the findings on kin support also refute both the disintegration and the superintegration arguments: We find that Mexican Americans are less likely to give financial support and more likely to provide practical help. Importantly, these ethnic differences are not uniform by gender. Ethnic differences in practical help—household help and child care—exist only among women. These findings support the argument of multiracial feminist theorists, who criticize the broad either/or terms of the superintegration versus disintegration argument. These theorists propose a synthetic approach that avoids making overarching statements that minority families are either ''more'' or ''less'' integrated than Euro American families or assuming that racial/ethnic differences are uniform by gender (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Collins, 2000; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004b).

Further, our analysis suggests that the differences between Mexican American and Euro American extended family integration can be attributed primarily to social class, and more specifically, to ethnic differences in socioeconomic standing. Our findings regarding socioeconomic standing once again offer some support to both the disintegration and the superintegration perspectives. On the one hand, we find that higher socioeconomic standing is associated with an increase in the likelihood of providing financial help: The higher income and more education of Euro Americans

make them more capable than Mexican Americans of giving money or goods worth $200 or more. On the other hand, higher income and education make one less likely to live with or near kin. This lack of proximity may reflect the decreased need for kin cooperation among those better off economically, their greater job-related demands for geographic mobility, as well as their increased opportunities to move away, including moving for college. In addition, whereas affluent families might stress the value of education and careers for their children, even if at distant institutions, families that highly value proximity may limit their children's educational or career options that might pull them away. All of these explanations help us think about geographic proximity to kin as an active choice (whether in response to preferences, opportunities, or demands) rather than a factor that researchers should treat simply as a control.

In contrast to the substantial effect of social class measures, differences in cultural values, even though they exist, do not seem to be primary factors explaining ethnic differences in family integration. We do find that extended familism and church attendance increase family integration, but they contribute little to explaining the ethnic gaps. In contrast to our expectations, gender traditionalism has little effect on extended family integration; it only increases the likelihood that men will give financial help to extended kin.

Although this analysis goes beyond prior research, its limitations point to directions for future studies. First, our measures of contact and support focus on noncoresident kin. Because coresidence usually involves both daily contact and frequent assistance (White & Rogers, 1997), and Mexican Americans are much more likely to live with kin, our measures likely underestimate the prevalence of contact and support among Mexican Americans. Future research should collect data on contact and support for coresident as well as noncoresident kin.

Second, our analyses rely on limited measures of cultural values and a limited conceptualization of culture. The familism scale only includes items on the desirability of coresidence and financial help between parents and their adult children; it does not assess familistic values regarding other types of extended kin. The scale measuring gender ideology also has a narrow focus on women's employment and does not tap other aspects of gender beliefs. Broader measures of religiosity or spirituality would be desirable as well.

Thus, future research should collect more extensive data on culture. We stress, however, that social class and controls accounted for much of the ethnic differences in family integration, thus not leaving much for culture to explain (the exceptions are the remaining differences in coresidence). Furthermore, many scholars question the assumption that culture can be reduced to a set of relatively stable values and beliefs held by individuals (Hays, 1994; Swidler, 1986), but it is difficult to conceptualize and operationalize culture in any other way in quantitative research. Therefore, future research should use qualitative data to compare ethnic groups and to assess cultural and socioeconomic explanations of ethnic differences.

Further, qualitative research could also help further explore the mechanisms behind the effects of social class on extended family integration. For instance, we assume that social class shapes respondents' involvement with their extended kin, but it is also possible that extended family integration can affect one's socioeconomic position, for example, education or income.

Longitudinal studies could also help shed light on the relationship between class and family integration, as well as between class and culture. More specifically, because we focus only on contemporary class position and cultural values, we cannot disentangle the various ways in which class and culture could have shaped each other over time (Zsembik, 1996). Future research should uses longitudinal and qualitative data to address such questions.

Despite these limitations, this article has demonstrated that the answer to the question of Mexican American family integration posed by the superintegration versus disintegration debate varies across different measures of integration. Mexican Americans exhibit greater family integration in terms of proximity to kin and practical support transfers, whereas Euro Americans have greater involvement in financial support. Therefore, when studying family integration, it should be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct.

We also demonstrated the importance of an intersectional approach to the studies of ethnicity and family integration. The main goal of this approach is to obtain empirical evidence and develop theoretical interpretations of the links among gender, race/ethnicity, and class inequalities. In accord with this goal, we explored the relationship of gender and class to ethnic differences in extended family integration. Our data show that ethnic differences that do exist are inextricably linked to gender and class inequalities.

Gender is crucial to understanding ethnic differences in family integration. More ethnic differences exist among women than among men, and these additional differences are concentrated in those tasks that are "feminized," household help and child care help. These important ethnic differences would have been masked if we had examined women and men together, as so much prior research on family integration has done.

Social class is important as well: We find that many of the ethnic differences in family integration can be attributed to differences in social class. In fact, socioeconomic variables explain much more variation in the data than does ethnicity. When Mexican Americans and Euro Americans have similar social class standing, their family integration levels appear similar as well. Thus, although much literature focuses on ethnicity as a force shaping family integration, the class component of its effects should be made explicit. We do not argue, however, that ethnicity is not important; it is. The socioeconomic positions of Mexican Americans and Euro Americans are far from equal, and as ethnicity remains an important factor shaping one's class position, it also retains a crucial link to extended family integration.

Furthermore, even though the effects of social class on ethnic differences in family integration are mostly similar for women and men, there are some important exceptions: Income and employment shape women's, but not men's, chances of living near kin, and education shapes women's, but not men's, chances of coresiding with relatives. In contrast, employment status affects men's, but not women's, chances of giving gifts or loans to kin. These patterns suggest that both the effects of ethnicity and the effects of social class, as well as the relationship between them, should be examined separately for women and men. In short, our findings emphasize the need for empirical evidence on, and theorizing about, the role of gender and social class in shaping and moderating the effects of race/ethnicity on family life.

NOTE

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