Communication Networks and Perceptions of Social Support as Antecedents to College Adjustment: A Comparison Between Student Commuters and Campus Residents

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RESEARCH on college commuters has typically been conducted in the context of traditional university campuses with dormitory systems, in which comparisons are made between *"students* and . . . *commuter students;* as if commuter students were not students" (Miller, 1986, p. 45). Since Chickering (1974) asserted that "when students are aggregated for all two- and four-year colleges and universities, the residents are the 'haves' and the commuters are the 'have nots'" in terms of college impact (Copland-Wood, 1986, p. 27), concern has been expressed for commuter students and the effect of the stress of commuting on college involvement, persistence toward degree completion, and other aspects of college adjustment.

Jacoby (1989) argues that many faculty members and administrators do not regard commuters as *real* college students, perhaps because of their own "traditional" college experience. She goes on further to say that "television, movies, and books continue to reinforce our stereotypes of the good old college days: students living together on campus, having parties, and playing pranks" (p. 63).

All students who do not fit the conventional definition have been classified as commuters without any further distinctions. Jacoby and Girrell's (1981) definition of the commuter as "any student not living on campus" (p. 36) has been accepted as the "functional definition" (Sloan and Wilmes, 1989, p. 67) by many researchers in the area. Copland-Wood (1986) goes slightly further by categorizing commuters as students who lived "beyond a five-mile radius of the campus" (p.28).

According to the United States Department of Education (1987), commuters make up 81% of the student population in higher education. As such, their concerns need to be addressed. Furthermore, since commuters have been characterized as typically being older, more experienced and possibly, more academically motivated (Clodfelter, Furr and Wachowiak, 1984), their potential contribution to classroom interactions and campus life should not be ignored.

Clodfelter, Furr, and Wachowiak (1984) argue that there is no need to make broad commuter-resident generalizations or assume that on-campus residents have an academic advantage. Their findings indicated that, contrary to the popular assumption, commuters performed better academically than residents. However, the results are mediated by other factors such as marital status and type of off-campus living arrangements. It is important to note that there was no distinction made among those who live on the periphery of the campus and those who must drive longer distances. As long as they did not live on campus, students were classified as "commuters" regardless of their traveling distance.

These studies indicate that it is not clear whether commuting presents a disadvantage to academic adjustment or not, and whether the off-campus environment provides the social support necessary to buffer the negative effects of commuting. This paper is a two-part study that looks at the impact of social support on college adjustment among "traditional" campus residents and commuters. A hypothesized model of the impact of social support on college adjustment is tested in both contexts. The paper begins with a review of social support measures and the relationship between commuting and college adjustment.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Reviews of conceptual and operational issues related to the measurement of social support have emphasized the need to clarify the distinction among the conceptualizations of the construct and their relationship with outcome variables (Sarason, Shearin, Pierce, and Sarason, 1987; Orth-Gomer and Unden, 1987; O'Reilly, 1988). The debate on the functions of social support is particularly relevant to a consideration of the impact of social support on the adjustment of commuting students.

One consistent controversy concerning the conceptualization of social support concerns what actions, resources, and outcomes should be considered relevant to the provision of social support. Jacobson (1986) proposed a "tripartite classification" which includes three types of support consistently mentioned in the literature: emotional or affective, informational or cognitive, and practical or instrumental support (Schaefer, Coyne, and Lazarus, 1981; Israel, 1985; O'Reilly, 1988, among others). Emotional support involves behavior that fosters feelings of comfort and leads an individual to believe that he or she is respected and loved, and that others are available to provide care and security). Informational support refers to information, knowledge or advice that helps the individual understand the world, adjust to changes in it, find solutions to problems and gain feedback about one's behavior. Instrumental or practical support involves the provision of goods, services, or financial assistance that helps solve practical problems (Jacobson, 1986).

The general distinction among emotional, informational and instrumental behaviors appears consistently in other conceptual definitions of social support. As Orth-Gomer and Unden (1987) note, these behaviors are the most frequently covered components of social

support as a multidimensional construct. Therefore, this distinction seems to be the most useful categorization of supportive behaviors.

Aside from the dimensionality of social support, another operational issue that has been raised is concerned with differentiating between *perceptions* of social support and reported *availability* of support networks. For instance, Somera and Miller (1990) found that perceptions of emotional, informational, and practical support had differential effects on coping with stress among primary caregivers of chronically ill children. In addition, differences were also found for indicators of availability of social support among primary networks composed of family and friends, and secondary networks, composed of health care professionals and acquaintances. That is, the number of individuals in one's network who could provide various types of support have significant impact on coping with stressful situations. The effect of available emotional support was particularly strong in this study.

These studies point to the need to find further evidence for the dimensionality of the social support construct and the effects of various kinds of support. In the college contexts of commuters and campus residents, it is expected that the effect of the availability of network support and perceptions of social support will have varying effects on personal, social and academic adjustment.

COMMUTING STUDENTS AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT

Family theories generally assert that the family constitutes the primary support network which tempers the impact of stress on psychological well-being (Dunst, Trivette and Deal, 1988; Eggert, 1987). As such, students who live with their families should have more access to these support networks than those who live on campus. However, these networks may not be as relevant for the kind of advice and encouragement they need to achieve their academic goals. Thus, the commuter student particularly needs to integrate support systems and develop new supportive ties on campus. As Sloan and Wilme (1989) indicate, "there are limitations to the amount of support and advice that an individual who is not directly involved in the academic environment can reasonably provide, despite their best intentions" (p. 70).

A significant portion of the literature on college adjustment focuses on the concept of *involvement* as the primary factor in the impact of the college experience on the student (Copland-Wood, 1986; Chickering, 1974). Astin (1978) describes involvement as the time and effort expended by the student in activities directly related to the academic institution (p. 21). Increased involvement in campus life, socially and academically, presumably results in greater impact of the college experience. As Baker and Schultz (1992) suggest, a significant factor may be the expectations that the student has as he or she enters the academic environment.

Since commuter students are described as "diffused, widely scattered individuals who do not typically interact with each other, much less with another group" (Miller, 1986, p. 45), motivating them to spend time on campus is necessary. Assessments of whether commuter students are sufficiently "involved" or whether they have satisfactorily adjusted to the demands of college life have been made in the context of traditional campuses, in which comparisons between campus residents and commuters could be made. Scant attention has been paid to contexts in which that distinction is irrelevant, i.e., campuses on which everyone commutes. A comparison across levels of commuting on the basis of varying travel distances needs to be made. It is expected that personal, social, and academic adjustment will vary across levels of commuting, and between commuters and campus residents.

As comparisons are made between commuters and campus residents, it appears that the impact of social support on college adjustment in these populations may vary in terms of which type of social support is relevant to various aspects of adjustment. The hypothesized relationship among these variables is presented in the following model:

Availability of Network Support	Perceptions of Social Support	College Adjustment
- emotional	- emotional, social	- personal
- informational	- informational	- social
- instrumental	- instrumental, financial	- academic

That is, when members of one's network are available to provide emotional, instrumental, or informational support, this leads to perceptions of various types of social support (emotional, instrumental, financial, and informational). In turn, this leads to adjustment in the personal, social, and academic dimensions.

The next two sections describe the procedures, samples, instrumentation, analyses, and results of Study One and Study Two.

STUDY ONE

The purpose of Study One was to explore the perceptions of social support and college adjustment for commuting students. As described in the literature, this population is viewed as being less likely to be involved in college life as compared to campus residents, who have greater opportunities for involvement in college activities.

Procedures

Data were gathered at a southern university campus in which all students lived off-campus, since the university does not have a dormitory system. The university is character-ized as an "upper division campus", with students in the junior, senior, and graduate level. However, some students are simultaneously enrolled in a junior college, which is located on the same campus. Questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled in a variety of humanities and education courses. No extra credit was offered to those who agreed to participate. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed, and 194 were complete enough to be used in the analyses.

Sample Description

Consistent with the description of commuters as being older than typical university populations, the mean age in the sample is 29.92, ranging from 19 to 58. The majority were Caucasian (84%), with Hispanics (13%) and Blacks (3%) making up the rest of the sample. Fifty percent were single, 40% were married, and the remaining 10% were either divorced, widowed or separated. Most were seniors (34%), with 60% working. Majors represented in the sample include humanities, business, education, computer science, psychology, nursing, and chemistry.

Overall, the average commuting time to campus is 34.66 minutes one way. Subjects indicated that they make the trip approximately 4.78 times per week, while maintaining an average 18.40 hour work week. The sample was divided into four subgroups on the basis of commuting distance. Those who traveled five miles or less one way were classified as "local residents". "Low mileage" was defined as 10-30 miles one way, "medium mileage" as 30-60 miles one way, and "high mileage" as sixty miles or more one way. As Table 1 indicates, these differences imply significantly different lengths of travel time.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of the Commuter Sample

	Total Sample	Local Residents[1]	Low Mileage[2]	Medium Mileage[3]	High Mileage[4]
Mean number of work hours per week	18.40	20.68	16.34	19.39	14.57
Average travel to campus (minutes)	34.66	7.84	21.11	46.25	75.75*
Number of trips to campus per week	4.78	6.50	4.91	4.06	2.90*

*F-ratio significant at (p<.000)

[1]<5 miles away from the campus
[2]10-30 miles away from the campus
[3]30-60 miles away from the campus
[4]>60 miles away from the campus

Distance and travel time are apparent considerations in the number of trips made to campus, with those living farther away presumably arranging schedules to minimize the number of trips which have to be made. Those who drove an average of over 75 minutes per trip made less than three trips to the campus per week, while those who lived within 10 minutes of the campus made over six trips to the campus per week.

Instrumentation
    This study required the measurement of perceptions of social support, availability of network support, and college adjustment. Scales developed by Miller, Zook, and Lyles (1992) were used to measure various perceptions of support including social, emotional, informational, instrumental, and financial support, and college adjustment. For the perceptions of support instrument, subjects were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the likelihood of persons in their lives performing the supportive behavior described in the scale item. The college adjustment scales included items tapping personal, social, and academic adjustment. Subjects were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement to scale items on a five-point Likert scale.
    To measure availability of network support, a procedure used by Somera and Miller (1990) was used. This involves the identification of various members of subjects' networks whom they perceive could provide emotional, informational, and instrumental support on a five-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from "not at all" to "all the time" as indicators of availability of various types of support.

Analysis
    Confirmatory factor analysis (Hunter and Gerbing, 1982) was used to test the factor structure of the scales used to measure college adjustment and perceptions of social support The measurement models were analyzed with a CFA subroutine of the PACKAGE computer

program (Hunter and Lim, 19X7). Hunter's (1980) three criteria for assessing the unidimensionality of scales were used: (l) homogeneity of content, (2) internal consistency, and (3) parallelism with outside variables. Scales were confirmed to the extent that they met these criteria. After the factor structure of the scales were confirmed, Pearson correlations were computed for all major variables.

The path model was tested by subjecting the matrix of correlations to the ordinary least squares method of estimating path coefficients (Hunter and Gerbing, 1982). In this procedure, the numerical strength of each link is calculated by doing a simple or multiple regression of each variable on its causal antecedents. Estimates of the total squared error in the model should provide an indication of the tit between the hypothesized model and the data. In addition, the goodness of fit of the models were tested with the Lisrel VII computer program (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989) using the goodness-of-fit indices, chi-square values, and root mean square residuals.

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses performed to test the construct validity of the scale items for the perceptions of social support and college adjustment indicate that the scales are internally consistent and parallel with outside factors (See first author for scale items and factor loadings). The students in this sample indicate moderate levels of perceived support, with the mean of emotional support highest at 3.96 and financial support lowest at 3.51. Levels of social support and instrumental support were also moderate (x=3.86, x=3.85, respectively) while the mean for informational support was at 3.71. These results are presented in Table 2.

Comparisons across the commuting levels defined in an earlier section (from local residents within five miles to high mileage over sixty miles from campus) indicate that perceptions of support are progressively higher among those with higher mileage, although these differences are not significant. It is interesting to note, however, that the means increased progressively until the middle mileage level, and dropped off markedly with the high mileage level.

Similarly, availability of network support was moderate for the commuters' sample. Emotional network support was highest (x=31.49), followed by informational network support (x=32.35) and instrumental or practical support (x=27.58). Comparisons across commuting levels did not indicate a pattern similar to the scores for perceived support. Local residents indicated higher levels of support compared to the lower mileage group. For emotional network support, however, scores increased from the low mileage (x=26.83) to the medium (x=34.25) and high mileage group (x=34.97). This difference was significant (p≤.02) with the F-ratio at 2.95 (df=3). In the same manner, informational network support increased progressively from the low mileage group (x=27.67) to the medium (x=34.91) and high group (x=36.47). This difference is significant (p≤.02). A similar trend was observed for instrumental or practical support. However, the difference is not significant. Table 3 presents the mean scores and standard deviations on the personal, social, and academic adjustment scales.

For the total sample, the mean scores were moderate, ranging from 3.44 for social adjustment, 3.67 for personal adjustment, and 3.99 for academic adjustment.

Intercorrelations between perceived support variables were quite high, ranging from .83 to .92. For network support, correlations between emotional network support and informational network support was .96, and between emotional network support and instrumental network support, .59. On the other hand, the correlation between informational and instrumental network support was .54. All perceived support and network support variables were significantly correlated with personal and social adjustment (p≤.01). However, correlations with academic adjustment were rather low.

TABLE 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Network Availability and
Perceptions of Support Scales for the Commuter Sample

	Total Sample	Local Residents[1]	Low Mileage[2]	Medium Mileage[3]	High Mileage[4]
Social Support	3.86	3.79	3.85	4.01	3.72
	(.89)	(.96)	(.93)	(.80)	(.87)
Emotional Support	3.96	3.91	3.90	4.15	3.75
	(.86)	(.92)	(1.00)	(.68)	(.85)
Instrumental Support	3.85	3.80	3.76	4.04	3.71
	(.85)	(.95)	(.95)	(.66)	(.79)
Informational Support	3.82	3.71	3.76	4.01	3.74
	(.84)	(1.01)	(.86)	(.59)	(.81)
Financial Support	3.51	3.47	3.38	3.73	3.36
	(.92)	(1.00)	(.98)	(.77)	(.89)
Emotional Network Support	31.49	29.65	26.83	34.25	34.97*
	(14.32)	(15.02)	(13.82)	(12.54)	(15.19)
Informational Network Support	32.35	30.39	27.67	34.91	36.47**
	(14.14)	(14.52)	(14.21)	(12.79)	(14.17)
Practical Network Support	27.58	25.67	24.50	29.23	31.38
	(13.45)	(14.10)	(13.73)	(11.85)	(13.94)

[1] <5 miles away from the campus
[2] 10-30 miles away from the campus
[3] 30-60 miles away from the campus
[4] >60 miles away from the campus

The correlation between personal adjustment and social adjustment was .54, and between personal adjustment and academic adjustment, .45. Between social and academic adjustment, the correlation was .48. All correlations between the adjustment variables were significant ($p \leq .01$). The non significant correlations between academic support and the support variables (both perceptions and network availability) suggest that there may be an indirect link between support and academic adjustment, mediated by personal and social adjustment (See first author for correlation matrix). The path analysis takes this possibility into consideration.

TABLE 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the College Adjustment Scales
for the Commuter Sample

	Total Sample	Local Residents[1]	Low Mileage[2]	Medium Mileage[3]	High Mileage[4]
Personal Adjustment	3.67 (.58)	3.69 (.62)	3.57 (.62)	3.71 (.51)	3.67 (.58)
Social Adjustment	3.44 (.51)	3.37 (.52)	3.14 (.50)	3.53 (.54)	3.44 (.45)
Academic Adjustment	3.99 (.47)	3.93 (.49)	3.96 (.47)	4.05 (.40)	4.00 (.53)

[1] <5 miles away from the campus
[2] 10-30 miles away from the campus
[3] 30-60 miles away from the campus
[4] >60 miles away from the campus

The path model which was presented earlier hypothesizes that the availability of network support will lead to perceptions of various types of support. In turn, this is expected to lead to personal, social, and academic adjustment. From the correlation matrix generated, specific links between the variables were tested in terms of their fit to the overall structural model. The results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

A Model of Network Support, Perceptions of Support,
and College Adjustment in the Commuter Context
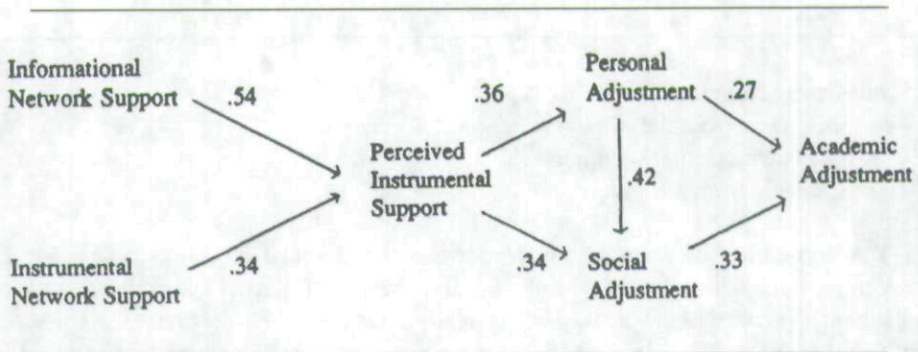
The sum of squared errors in this model is .058

Goodness-of-fit index= 1.00, chi-square value (df, 0)= .00
Root mean square residual= .000

From calculations using a subroutine in PACKAGE (Hunter and Lim, 1987), the path model which best fits the data from the commuters' sample has two antecedent variables, availability of informational and instrumental network support, leading to perceptions of instrumental support. In turn, instrumental support leads to personal and social adjustment. A link also leads from personal to social adjustment. Finally, personal and social adjustment lead to academic adjustment.

The sum of squared errors in the model is .058, indicating a very good fit to the data. This finding is supported by the results of the assessment of the model using LISREL 7 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989). The goodness-of-fit index for this model was 1.00, the root mean square residual was .000, the chi-square with 0 degrees of freedom was .00. Thus, the data fit the commuter model extremely well.

STUDY TWO

The purpose of Study Two was to explore the perceptions of social support and college adjustment for "traditional" students; those students who live on campus and who have greater availability to engage in campus life activities. The potential of students' involvement in all aspects of the institution presumably enhances the college experience. As such, a prime consideration for this study is the availability of support systems for this type of population. The following section expands on the procedures for gathering data, the instrumentation, and results of analyses.

Procedures

Data were collected at a midwestern university in which a majority of the undergraduate population resided on campus. The same survey that was used in Study One was given to discussion sections of a basic communication class at the university. The class is a required course for all university students (public speaking), hence a wide variety of majors were represented in the sample. Students were given extra credit points for completing the survey during class time. Two hundred and eighteen surveys were distributed, and 217 were complete enough to be used in analyses.

Sample Description

The mean age of the students was 22 years. With 71% in the 18-21 year category. Most were Caucasian (94%), with 38% of the sample at the sophomore level. Eighty-nine percent were single, and 53% reported working. Eighty-two percent of the sample lived within five miles of the campus, and 49% lived on campus. Eighty-three percent were able to get to the campus in fifteen minutes or less., and 89% of the sample did not have children.

Majors represented in the sample included nursing, public relations, radiography, respiratory therapy, psychology, theater, criminal justice, history, information and communication science, religious studies, political science, nuclear medicine, photojournalism, dietetics, speech communication, physical therapy, telecommunication, marketing, education, and journalism. Thus, there was a variety of academic disciples represented in the sample.

Instrumentation

This study also used the scales developed by Miller, Zook, and Lyles (1992) to measure perceptions of social, emotional, informational, instrumental, and financial support. Respondents answered with a five-point Likert scale. The college adjustment scales were used with this sample as with the commuter sample. Respondents indicated their agreement/disagree-

ment to a five-point Likert scale in measuring adjustment. Finally, Somera and Miller's (l990) measure of availability of network support was used to measure members of respondents' networks whom they perceived could provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support.

Analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the factor structure of the support and adjustment scales (Hunter and Gerbing, 1982). The measurement models were analyzed with a confirmatory factor analysis subroutine of the PACKAGE computer program (Hunter and Lim 1987). Scales were confirmed to the extent that they were internally consistent, displayed homogeneity of content, and were parallel with outside factors (See second author for scale items and factor loadings). After the factor structures of the scales were confirmed, Pearson correlations were computed for all major variables. Finally, path analyses were conducted using a subroutine of the PACKAGE computer program and LISREL VII (Joreskog & Sorbpm, 1989).

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses tested the internal consistency of the social support and college adjustment scales. Results indicated that these scales demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency and parallelism with outside factors. The factor loadings and alphas, presented in Appendix, are comparable to those reported in Study One. Scales measuring perceived availability of emotional network support, informational network support and practical network support had alphas of .88, .89, and .85 respectively.

The students in this sample report relatively high levels of emotional support (x=4.19) and social support (4.21). Instrumental support was also high with a mean of 4.04, however perceptions of financial support were lower with a mean of 3.52. Informational support was also somewhat lower with a mean of 3.98. The mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Means and Standard Deviations for the Adjustment Scales, Network Support, and Perceptions of Support in the Campus Resident Sample
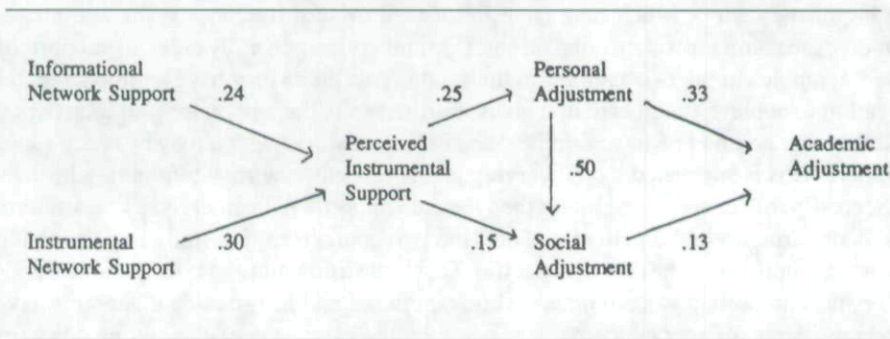
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Adjustrnent	3.69	.48
Social Adjustment	3.83	.64
Personal Adjustment	3.64	.56
Informational Network Support	59.37	10.43
Instrumental Network Support	55.40	10.82
Emotional Network Support	58.38	11.08
Emotional Support	4.19	.66
Financial Support	3.52	.84
Social Support	4.21	.62
Instrumental Support	4.04	.68
Informational Support	3.98	.65

Unlike the commuter sample. the participants in this study report higher levels of perceived network support. The mean for informational network support was 59.37, for the emotional network support was 58.38, and for the instrumental network support, 55.40. Finally, perceived social adjustment had the highest mean (3.83), with personal adjustment at 3.64 and academic adjust at 3.69 (See second author for correlation matrix).

As in Study One, the intercorrelations among the support variables are quite high, ranging from .69 to .87. Similar to the commuter sample. the emotional network and informational network correlation was high (r=.90). However, in this sample, the correlation between availability of emotional and practical network support were much higher than in the commuter sample. The correlation between these variables for the commuter sample was .59, and for this sample .83. A similar scenario is evident for informational and practical support; r=.54 for the commuter sample, and r=.82 for this sample. Perceptions of emotional support, social support, and informational support are significantly correlated to personal, social, and academic adjustment. It appears that the difference between the commuter sample and this sample lies in the stronger correlations between the support variables and academic adjustment.

TABLE 6

A Model of Perceived and Network Support and College Adjustment
in the Campus Resident Context

Informational Network Support .24 → Perceived Instrumental Support .25 → Personal Adjustment .33 → Academic Adjustment

Instrumental Network Support .30 → Perceived Instrumental Support

Perceived Instrumental Support .50 → Social Adjustment

Perceived Instrumental Support .15 → Social Adjustment .13 → Academic Adjustment

The sum of squared errors in this model is .128

Goodness-of-fit index= 1.00, chi-square value (df, 0)= .00
Root mean square residual= .000

The path model presented in Table 6 indicates that in predicting personal, social, and academic adjustment, informational and instrumental network support are related to perceived instrumental support. In turn, perceived instrumental support influences personal and social adjustment as well as (indirectly), academic adjustment. The sum of squared errors in this model is .12, which indicates a good fit to the data, based on the number of parameters estimated in comparison to the number of correlation coefficients which were calculated (Hunter and Gerbing, 1982). LISREL VII (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989) goodness-of-fit indices also suggest that the campus model was a good fit to the data. The chi-square value for this model with 0 degrees of freedom was .00, the goodness-of-fit index was 1.00, and the root mean square residual was .000.

DISCUSSION

Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of these studies. First of all, the study demonstrates that the variables which are critical to academic adjustment vary in the contexts of commuting students and campus residents. In the context of commuting students, the availability of informational and instrumental network support and the perception of instrumental support are the most important antecedent variables to personal, social and academic adjustment. Both personal and social adjustment influence academic adjustment, although a path from personal to social adjustment suggests that personal adjustment precedes or influences social adjustment.

On the other hand, the path model for the sample of campus residents indicates that informational and instrumental network support are important to adjustment. However, comparisons of the path coefficients with those in the path model for the commuter sample suggest that the perceived support generated may not be as important for the adjustment of campus residents as it is for commuters. This finding is consistent with Sloan and Wilmes' (1989) finding that the campus resident views the university as a substitute for the home environment, while the commuter views it as an "additive transition" to the home environment. In the case of campus resident, the separation from network ties may very well lead to perceptions that they would provide the support needed if they were present; however, the fact that they are not readily available does not diminish perceptions of the support they could offer. In the case of commuters, the actual role of extant relationships in providing various forms of support is more critical.

One of the factors which may have influenced these differences is the age range in commuter and campus resident populations. Commuters are generally older, as supported by the demographics in the two samples in this study. This alone may have an impact on their motivation to achieve their academic goals. Furthermore, the age factor also increases the possibility that commuters have families, and extant networks which may be ready sources of support. This is suggested by the varying levels of support across commuting levels.

Secondly, the differences among the types of support which emerged as the important antecedent variables in the path models for the two contexts in this study indicate that the influence of support may be context-specific. That is, instrumental and informational support may be more important to commuters while emotional and informational support may be campus residents' greater concerns. It is possible that campus residents, living apart from their families, perceive greater needs for emotional support, while commuters who have emotional ties which have not been separated by the realities of campus living, are more concerned with overcoming the stress associated with commuting through informational and instrumental support.

Thirdly, the finding that personal, social, and academic adjustment did not vary significantly across commuting levels provides support for arguments against the claim that commuting students are academically disadvantaged, and that they do not have the resources for a meaningful college experience (Jacoby, 1989, among others). Apparently, they need different types of support in comparison to campus residents, but when these types of support are available, adjustment can also be accomplished. Considering their higher age range, they may in fact be more academically motivated, as has suggested in the earlier research. In addition, the finding that perceptions of support increased progressively across commuting levels suggest that commuters, at least for this sample, perceive that the support they receive meets their needs adequately.

Finally, the differential effects of availability of network support and perceptions of support lend some support to the conceptualization of support as a multidimensional construct (Orth-Gomer and Unden, 1987; O'Reilly, 1988, among others). The distinction between availability of network support as a *structural* dimension and support as a *perceptual*

dimension has communicative implications. It implies that the availability of support may or may not create supportive perceptions. These perceptions have to be communicated, as well as defined and reinforced in a variety of situations.

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