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Southern Immigrant Academic Adaptation Study

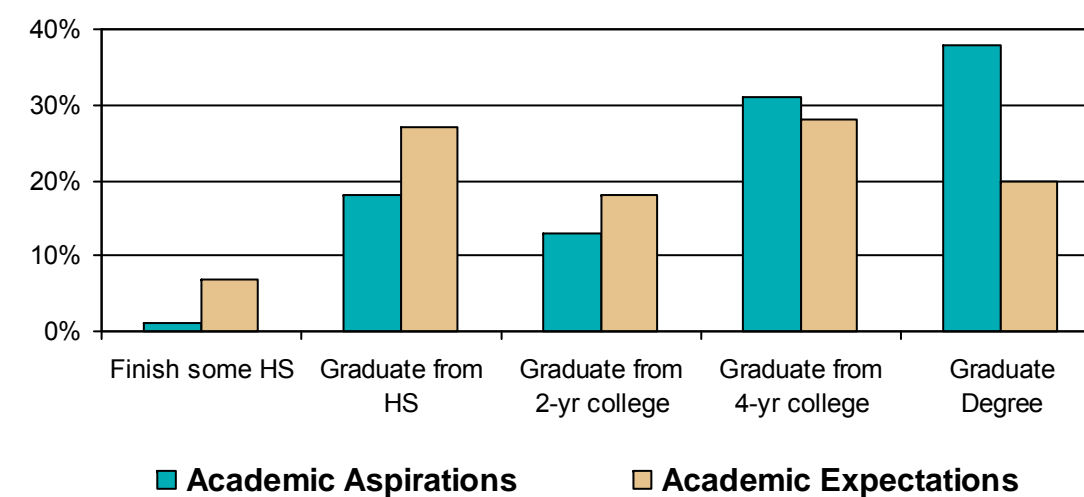
Introduction

- North Carolina is an emerging immigrant community that has been experiencing a large influx of Latino/a migrants since the late 1990s.
- This study examines the academic aspirations and expectations of Latino/a 9th graders enrolled in high schools throughout North Carolina.

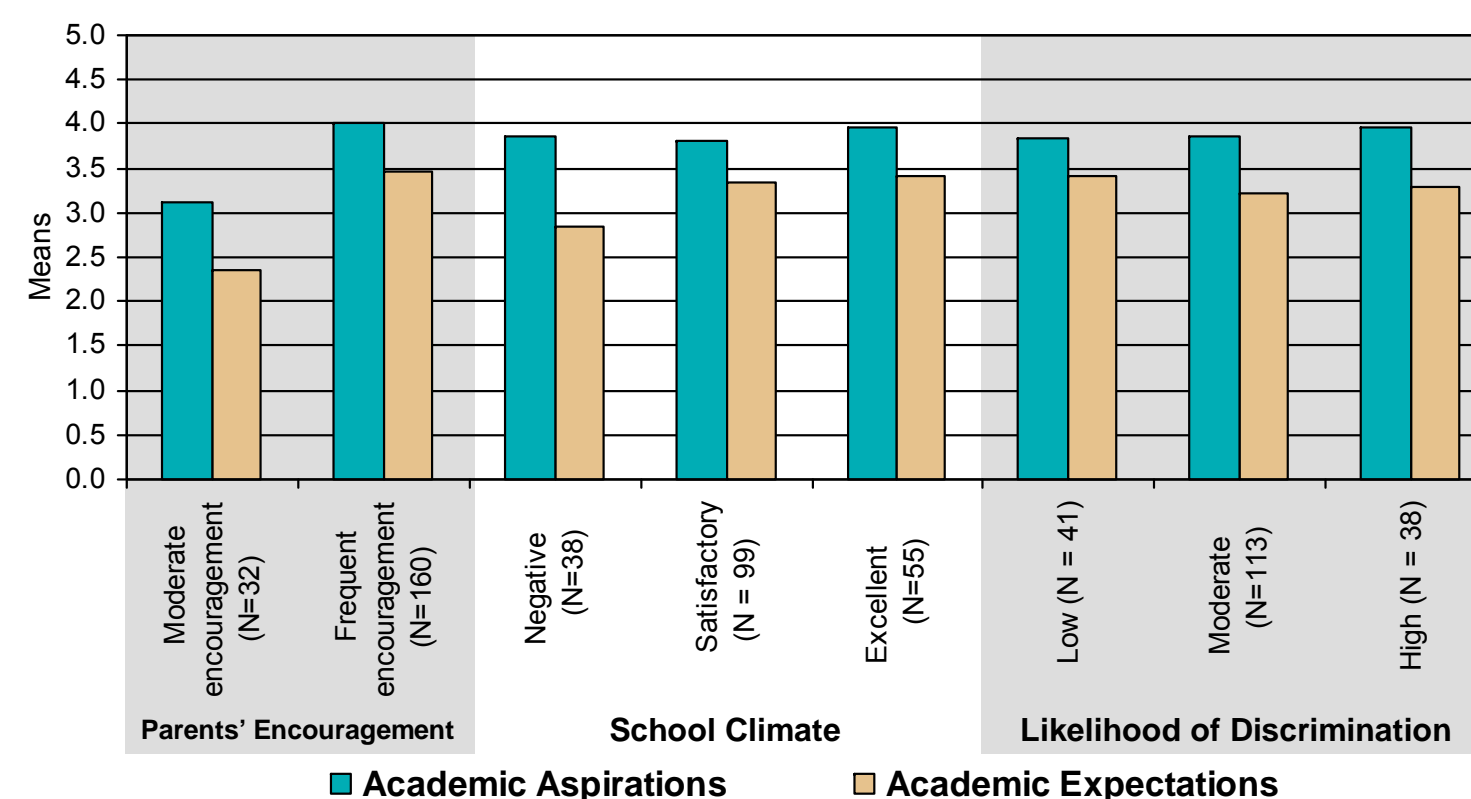
Methods

- Data and Sample:** We use baseline data from in-school and take-home surveys completed by 192 9th Grade Latino/a students. In addition, we use qualitative interview data from 16 adolescents who were randomly drawn from those who completed the survey.
- Measures:** We measured academic aspirations (how far a student wants to go in school) and expectations (how far they think they'll go) on a 5-point Likert scale. Independent variables included school climate ($\alpha = .84$), likelihood of racial discrimination ($\alpha = .73$), parent encouragement, foreign-born status, ethnic identity, gender, language preference, and family structure.
- Analysis:** We describe aspirations and expectations for our sample. We then use one-way ANOVAs to estimate bivariate relations between these outcome and key independent variables. We conclude with the estimation of ordered logit models on aspirations and expectations.

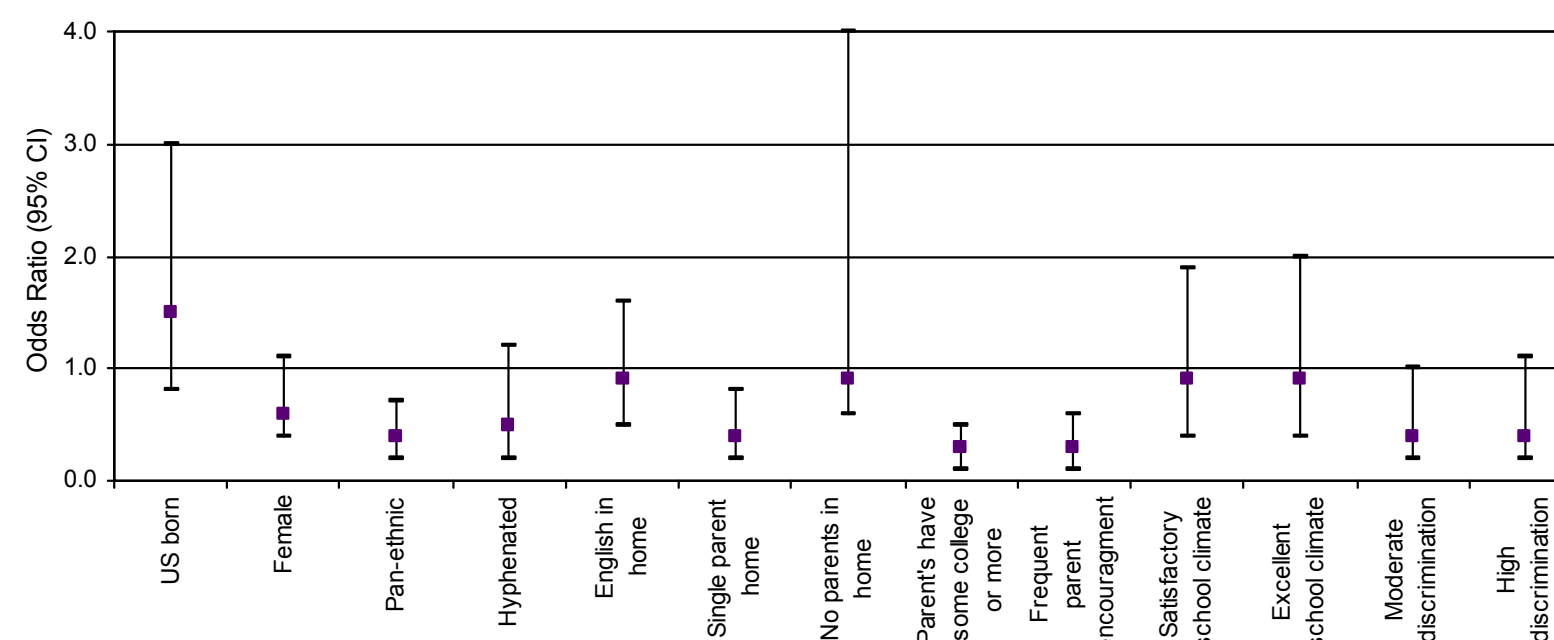
Percentage of Latino/a 9th Graders, by Academic Aspirations and Expectations



Means of Academic Aspirations and Expectations, by Parents' Engagement, School Climate, and Perceived Likelihood of Discrimination



Ordered Logit of Academic Aspirations



Quotes: Aspirations

"I want to study business administration, like financial (...) Or a pilot, I want to be a pilot" – Chachi (5-17-07, p.21)

"Well, I really, I think I can pass college. I want to be a lawyer (...) as soon as I get out of college I want to go to law school" – African-American/Puerto Rican male (5/29/07, p.16)

Quotes: Encouragement

"She [mother] just wants me to pay attention in school (...) Maybe she's right, maybe I should just think to study and just hope for the best in the future." – Chachi (p.22)

"(...)she just always wants me to bring my grades home, she has like really, really, really high expectations. (...) I think my mama shouldn't be so strict but I'm kind of thankful because if she wasn't I'd probably be doing bad in school or whatever." – Alana (5/1/07, pp.17-18)

Quotes: Lower Expectations

"Well, I want to go to college, but you know my mom says that we don't have papers, it makes me like not want to go anymore. (...) I don't talk to the teachers about it. Just one time, my 7th grade math teacher was like, 'you need to go to college' and I said, 'I'll try'. (...) honestly, I don't think I'll finish high school. (...) you know when girls, you know they're restricted, they do crazy stuff." – Sabrina (1/29/07, p.19, p.26)

"I plan to go to college a couple of years to study for what I want to be. (...) Interviewer: And what do you need to do to get into college? Respondent: mmmm, I'm not sure. I'm not really sure right now." – Jose (12/11/06, p.25)

Quotes: Discrimination/School Climate

"(...)there's still a lot of like white people and they say a lot of racist things. Like, if it's a Mexican or something and they drop their stuff they'll be like 'wetback can you please get it?' " – Alana (p.14)

"I: And what types of kids in school do you not like? R: mmmm, the wannabe kids, the preppy kids (...) talking about our race and stuff (...) just started talkin' bout Mexicans and stuff (...) It made me mad. They talking stuff they don't know about us, you know?" – Diego (12/14/06, pp.17-18)

Conclusions

- Over 80% of Latino 9th graders aspire to continue their education after high school, but only 66% expect to be able to do so.
- According to our ANOVA analyses, Latino students have higher aspirations & expectations when they have frequent parental encouragement, perceive an excellent school climate, and perceive a low likelihood of discrimination.
- After controlling for demographic factors, perceived discrimination significantly influences Latino 9th graders' aspirations.
- Parents' encouragement, school climate, and discrimination play a vital role in the educational adjustment of Latino 9th graders. However, high aspirations and encouragement alone are not enough to promote the educational success of North Carolina's Latino youth. Policies to reduce the likelihood of discrimination and improve the school climate can promote their academic adjustment and long-term economic well-being.

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