Fitting In: The Roles of Social Acceptance and Discrimination in Shaping the Academic Motivations of Latino Youth in the U.S. Southeast

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ABSTRACT
An emerging literature suggests that high academic aspirations contribute to academic achievement. Yet, few researchers have studied the specific academic values and beliefs that lay behind students' aspirations or how the social contexts of schools can affect these academic values and beliefs. Using data on 459 Latino 9th graders from the LA-SIAA and the NC-SIAA studies, we evaluate the specific educational values and beliefs that motivate the academic achievement of Latino youth and contrast the school experiences of Latino youth in an emerging Latino community, North Carolina, with the school experiences of youth living in a traditional settlement community, Los Angeles. Despite their greater fears of discrimination in North Carolina, we find that Latino youth in North Carolina are more academically motivated than their peers in Los Angeles. This is partially because they are more likely to be immigrants. Being an immigrant, having a stronger sense of ethnic identification, and having a stronger sense of family obligation were each linked to a more positive view of the school environments. Therefore, these factors each partially explained the immigrant advantage in motivation and helped to counter the potentially harmful effects of discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Latino families have lived primarily in six states—California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois (Guzman, 2001). However, the 1990s were marked by the dispersion of Latino families to new settlement states in the South, Midwest, and Western Mountain regions of the United States (Sachachter, 2003; Suro & Tafoya, 2004). Among these, North Carolina ranked first in the growth of the Latino families, including many foreign-born Latino parents with children (Guzman, 2001; Perry & Schachter 2003).

The influx of Latino children into North Carolina and other Southern states which do not have a tradition of hosting either Latino or immigrant populations is profoundly affecting the educational systems in these states and is of enormous public policy significance. If these children are not successful in school, the dreams of many of their parents will be unfulfilled, their talents will be wasted, and their economic opportunities will be severely constrained.

Though previous research suggests that Latino youth are at high risk of school failure (Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006; Fry, 2003) and enter and complete college at lower rates (Fry, 2004), they begin their high school careers with high academic aspirations (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Among Latino youth, the first (i.e. foreign-born youth with foreign-born parents) and second (i.e. U.S. born youth with foreign-born parents) generation children of immigrants have significantly higher aspirations than their third generation (i.e. U.S.-born youth with U.S.-born parents) peers (Kao & Tienda, 1995). These high academic aspirations help to propel them forward and motivate them to overcome socioeconomic and linguistic barriers to their academic success (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Fuligni, 1997).

An emerging literature suggests that high academic aspirations contribute to academic achievement. Yet, few researchers have studied the specific academic values and beliefs that lay

behind students' aspirations (Fuligni, 1997; Fuligni, 2001; Fuligni & Tseng, 1999). Moreover, few researchers have studied the academic experiences and motivations of youth in emerging Latino communities as compared to traditional settlement communities. In this analysis, we evaluate the specific educational values and beliefs that motivate the academic achievement of Latino youth and contrast the school experiences of Latino youth in an emerging Latino community, North Carolina, with the school experiences of youth living in a traditional settlement community, Los Angeles. By doing so, we gain insight into how the social context of schools shape the academic adaptation of Latino youth, especially youth with immigrant parents. We hypothesize that differences in the academic motivations of Latino youth living in North Carolina and Los Angeles can be explained by youths' nativity, by differences in their perceptions of social acceptance and discrimination in these two communities, and by differences in their ethnic and family identifications.

The Social Context of Reception in North Carolina and Los Angeles

Ecological models of child development emphasize how social contexts promote or inhibit the expression of individual characteristics and the development of strategies and competencies that facilitate adaptation (Bronfrenbrenner, 1986; Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Similarly, research on immigrant families emphasizes how the characteristics of a host society or reception community shape youths' assimilation experiences and outcomes (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). A leading theory on the assimilation and adaptation of immigrant youth, segmented assimilation theory, argues that the academic adjustment of immigrant youth depends on the interaction between family and community resources, intergenerational patterns of acculturation within a family, and external challenges. These external challenges include racial discrimination in school, work, and neighborhood environments (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Garcia-Coll et al.,

1996), the size and cohesiveness of co-ethnic social networks in a community (Alba & Nee, 2003; Waters & Jiménez, 2005), and inner-city subcultures that promote deviant lifestyles and an oppositional culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, research by Wilson (1987) and Massey (1990) suggests that joblessness and concentrated poverty, especially in America's inner cities, combined with the social isolation or the segregation of minority populations can create a context that undermines the successful adaptation of immigrants and their children.

In North Carolina, a combination of factors that both promote and inhibit the academic adaptation of Latino youth exists. The relative lack of racial and economic segregation of Latinos may facilitate youths' successful adaptation, but the presence of small, less-established co-ethnic communities may hinder their assimilation. In some communities, there has been an outpouring of support for the newcomers (Maitland, 2006). In others, local governments have passed ordinances banning the use of Spanish in public agencies and local police routinely work with officials from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E) to identify and deport Latino residents who are unauthorized immigrants (Martinez, 2006). In all communities across North Carolina, public employers in education, health and social services struggle to identify professionals able to communicate in Spanish and provide culturally appropriate services (Glascock 2002; Knapp 2002).

Los Angeles, in contrast, has a Latino community that has existed for several generations, stretching back to the period when the southwestern region of the U.S. was part of Mexico. Although Mexicans and other Latino groups in Los Angeles suffer from poorer economic conditions as compared to whites, they have a strong influence upon the social, cultural, and political context of the larger Southern California area. Spanish is commonly spoken and a diverse array of Latino-focused businesses and services exist. In 2005, a Latino was elected as

the mayor of Los Angeles and the speaker of the California State Assembly until 2008 was Latino. It is difficult to overemphasize the difference between Los Angeles and North Carolina in terms of the history and integration of Latinos in the social fabric of the local communities.

Differences in the social and economic context of reception for Latino youth living in North Carolina and Los Angeles can be summarized through U.S. Census data (2000). In 2000, North Carolina had a 35% lower cost-of-living (ACCRA 2000 Cost of living index: 109 vs. 144), fewer persons living below the Federal Poverty Level (12.3% vs. 17.9%), fewer foreign-born residents (5.3% vs. 36.2%), and fewer Latino residents (4.6 % vs. 44.6%). In addition, residents of North Carolina over the age of 5 are more likely to speak only English (91% vs. 42.4%) and less likely to speak Spanish well or very well (3.0% vs. 25.6%). As a result, Latinos living in North Carolina are more likely to be linguistically (36.8% vs. 23.8%) and, consequently, socially isolated. Finally, Latinos in North Carolina are more likely to live in a rural area (26.7% vs. 0.3%), have smaller families (3.76 vs. 4.30 persons), have entered the U.S. after 1995 (34% vs. 9%), and, among those over 25, have less than a high school education (55.5% vs. 24.2%).

Social Acceptance and Discrimination

In general, North Carolinians harbor negative feelings about the influx of Hispanics. In a 1996 Poll, nearly half (42%) stated that they were uncomfortable with the increasing presence of Hispanics, about two-thirds (67%) said that they thought their neighbors would not approve of Hispanics moving into their neighborhood, and more than half (55%) said that they did not feel comfortable around people who do not speak English (Johnson, Johnson-Webb, & Farrell, 1999). Likewise, a 2002 poll of Los Angelinos found that 54% of blacks and 33% of whites living in LA believed that Hispanics were “most in conflict with their group” (Sears, 2002). Sources of

ethnic conflict included gangs and crime, jobs and income, access to higher education, and access to health care.

Social acceptance and social discrimination at the community-level can translate into feelings of social acceptance and discrimination in schools and affect students' academic motivations. Yet, the vast majority of studies have focused only on the relationship between perceived discrimination and the psychological adjustment of youth (see for example Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Szalacha et al., 2003). Using qualitative techniques, some studies have also documented experiences of social marginalization and discrimination in schools (Rosenbloom & Way 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Few studies have quantitatively examined minority adolescents' perceptions of either social acceptance or discriminatory experiences and their influence on academic well-being, especially among Latino youth (Shmander, Major, & Gramzow, 2001; Stone & Han, 2005; Degarmo & Martinez, 2006). However, evidence is beginning to accumulate that suggests discriminatory experiences towards Latino youth reduce their academic motivation (Shmander, Major, & Gramzow 2001), lower their academic performance (Stone & Han, 2005; Degarmo & Martinez, 2006), and increase their risk of dropping out of high school (Degarmo & Martinez, 2006). At the same time, social support from teachers, parents, and peers can buffer Latino students from the negative effects of discrimination (Degarmo & Martinez, 2006). In this analysis, we expect that discrimination will be negatively associated with academic motivations; whereas, social acceptance will be positively associated with academic motivation.

Academic Motivation and Children of Immigrants

Whether from their peers, teachers, and the society at large, as they navigate between two worlds and begin to learn the culture of their new communities, the children of immigrants may confront both positive and negative ethnic stereotypes for the first time. Coping with these ethnic

stereotypes while at the same time adjusting to other aspects of their new school environments (e.g., differences in teaching styles and language) could potentially reduce the academic motivations of foreign-born youth as compared to their U.S.-born peers. However, Latino immigrant youth and their parents consistently report moving to the U.S. for a better education and greater opportunities (Perreira, Chapman, & Livas-Stein, 2006; Romo, 1984). They enter U.S. school systems brimming with optimism and encouragement from their parents to overcome adversity and succeed. Thus, some researchers have found that the academic performance of children in immigrant families, especially Asian families, is as good or better than the academic performance of their U.S.-born peers (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Fuligni 1997) and they are at lower risk of dropping out of high school (Perreira, Harris, Lee 2007). In addition, the cultural reference point for the children of immigrants is their home country where many face harsher environments and poorer quality schools than in the U.S. (Ogbu, 1991; Alvarez, 1971). This dual frame of reference adds to their optimism for the future (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and to their potential to succeed at school. For these reasons, we expect the foreign-born children of immigrants to have stronger academic motivations than U.S. born youth.

Ethnic and Family Identifications

While the negative impact of discriminatory experiences can be countered by both positive experiences at school and immigrant optimism, these effects can also be attenuated by social identification with a students' ethnic and family group. Ethnic identity represents the extent to which adolescents feel close to their ethnic background and believe that their ethnicity is a integral part of their larger identity. Numerous studies have suggested that adolescents' identification with their ethnic background provides meaning to their academic efforts and is associated with a higher level of motivation. For example, Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone,

Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, and Zimmerman (2003) reported a link between stronger ethnic identity and greater motivation and enrollment in college. Oyserman, Harrison, and Bybee (2001) found a positive association between ethnic identification and feelings of academic efficacy. Most previous work has been conducted with African American youth, but a recent study observed similar associations between ethnic identity and higher levels of motivation among students with Mexican backgrounds (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005).

Similarly, adolescents who identify with their families appear to invest more in their schooling. In particular, students with a stronger sense of obligation to support, assist, and respect their families tend to have higher academic motivation (Fuligni, 2001). Adolescents from Latin American backgrounds tend to place a greater importance upon family obligation than do their peers from European backgrounds across generations (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). The emphasis upon family assistance among this group stems in part from their cultural traditions, but it also is in response to their contemporaneous conditions of being immigrants and ethnic minorities in American society (Fuligni & Flook, 2005). Latino students with a strong sense of obligation to the family see trying hard and doing well in school as one of their duties as members of their family, both in response to the sacrifices made by their parents and to obtain better paying jobs to help them to support their parents in the future. Interestingly, this sense of family obligation appears to be one reason why Latino students often have higher levels of motivation than their equally-achieving peers from European backgrounds (Fuligni, 2001).

METHODS

Sample

This study uses data from the *Los Angeles Social Identification and Academic Adaptation* (LA-SIAA)), a mixed-methods study of the social identifications and academic adaptations of

Latino adolescents, and the *North Carolina Southern Immigrant Academic Adaptation Study* (NC-SIAA) project, a companion study to the NC-SIA study. The combined LA-NC SIAA data contains information on 557 Latino adolescents (318 in Los Angeles; 239 in North Carolina) enrolled in school in Los Angeles in 2005-06 and North Carolina in 2006-07. The LA sample was selected from three public high schools with a high concentration of Latino youth. In North Carolina, a stratified cluster design was used to sample Latino youth enrolled in 9th grade in nine public high schools located in high-density, high-growth Latino immigrant receiving communities throughout North Carolina.

[INSERT TABLE 1]

After deleting cases with missing values on the dependent (N = 11) or independent variables (N=87) used in this analysis, the analytic sample consisted of 459 Latino youths, averaging 15 years of age and was fairly evenly divided between females (53%) and males (47%). The majority of the adolescents had immigrant parents (84%), but the percent of youth who were immigrants themselves (i.e. foreign-born or first generation immigrants) differed significantly between North Carolina and Los Angeles (67% vs. 18%) respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 113.45$, $p < .001$. Few of the youth ($N_{NC} = 8$, $N_{LA} = 62$) were U.S. born youth with U.S. born parents (i.e. third-plus generation immigrants).

In North Carolina, half (51%) of the youth had parents who had less than a high school degree. Though their mothers and fathers were employed (mothers, 64%; fathers, 85%), they typically worked as unskilled laborers in food service, child care, landscaping, construction, and meat packing. In Los Angeles, significantly more parents had graduated from high school and completed some college (54% vs. 27%; $\chi^2(1) = 35.59$, $p < .001$). Most (64%) were working and 38% were working in semiprofessional and professional occupations.

Adolescents predominantly came from two-parent homes in which the biological parents were still married (53%). Though many youth in the North Carolina had lived separately from one or both parents in the past (66%), few youth in either North Carolina or Los Angeles currently lived with an adult caregiver other than their parent, 6% vs. 2% respectively. Fewer than 10% of the adolescents reported being the only child in the family (N =43).

Rating their abilities to speak and understand English on a 5-point scale (1=not very well, 5-very well), adolescents reported a moderate degree of proficiency (M_{NC} = 3.77; SD_{NC} = 1.33; M_{LA} = 4.74; SD_{LA} = .47; t = 9.91, df = 245, p < .001). However, in contrast to Los Angeles, few Latino youth in North Carolina spoke primarily English at home (17% vs. 55%; $\chi^2(1) = 70.45$, p < .001). Parents in North Carolina typically spoke with their children in Spanish.

Procedure

Both studies used the same recruitment and interview protocols. Therefore, they are fully comparable. In their preferred language (Spanish or English), respondents completed a 45-minute in-school survey regarding their immigration histories, family relationships, cultural and ethnic identifications, educational attitudes, and mental health. In addition, they completed a 15-minute take-home survey with additional questions on their household composition, parents' education and employment, and language use. Finally, respondents completed a daily diary checklist every day over a two-week period. These daily diary checklists included questions about: (1) negative events and stressors, (2) time spent on school, work, and family activities, (3) academic engagement, (4) feelings and moods, and (5) role fulfillment. A subsample of students in North Carolina and Los Angeles completed in-depth interviews as well. However, this analysis uses only data from the surveys and daily diary checklists.

Measures

Academic Motivations. Four dimensions of academic motivations were considered in this study – importance, usefulness, future value, and intrinsic value of education. To identify the students' beliefs in the importance of academic success, students rated how important the following 6 items were to them: "doing well in school," "getting good grades," "going to college after high school," "getting an 'A' on almost every test," "being one of the best students in your class," and "going to the best college after high school" (Fuligni, 1997). The extent to which youths believed that education was integral for their future success in life (i.e. future value of school) was assessed with 5 items. Students responded to the following statements: "going to college is necessary for what I want to do in the future," "doing well in school is the best way for me to succeed as an adult," "I need to get good grades in school in order to get a good job as an adult," "it is important to do well in school to earn a good living as an adult," "doing well in school is the best way for me to get ahead in life" (Fuligni et al., 2005).

Students' intrinsic value of school and beliefs in its usefulness were assessed using an adaptation of multi-item measures developed by Eccles (1983). The intrinsic value of school was based on mean responses to 2 items: "In general, I find working on school work [very boring/very interesting]" and "How much do you like working on school work [a little/a lot]" (Fuligni et al., 2005). Belief in the usefulness of school was based on mean responses to 4 items: "For me, being in school is [not at all important/very important," "Right now, how useful do you find things you learn in school to be in your everyday life?" "In the future, how useful do you think the things you have learned in school will be in your everyday life?" "How useful do you think the things you have learned in school will be for what you want to be after you graduate?"(Fuligni et al., 2005). Scores on each of these scales range from 1 to 5. In our

sample, these scales each possessed a good internal consistency -- importance (α = .83), usefulness (α = .75), future value (α = .79), and intrinsic value (α = .77) of education.

Social Acceptance. Social acceptance is defined along four dimensions—school climate, adult encouragement, daily positive school experiences, and any positive ethnic treatment. Adapted from Tyler and Degoey (1995), our 4-item measure of school climate taps the extent to which students feel that they are respected and valued by the school (e.g., "I feel that the adults at my school respect the work that I do"). Our measure of encouragement by adults at school is based on responses to two items regarding how often adults at school have encouraged a student to take college placement or honors courses and how often they have encourage a student to continue his/her education after high school. Scores on school climate and adult encouragement range from 1 to 5. In our sample, both scales possessed good internal consistency – school climate (α = .87) and adult encouragement (α = .73).

We derive the school experiences measure from daily diary self-reports on whether students: (1) got along with adults at school, (2) did not get along with adults at school (reverse coded), (3) had an argument or were punished by an adult at school (reverse coded), (4) were harassed, picked on, or teased by a student in school (reverse coded). Scores on these variables are summed across 14 days and range from 0 to 56. Also derived from daily diary self-reports, our measure of any positive ethnic treatment captures responses to the statement "something good happened to you or you were treated well because of your race or ethnicity (yes/no). Any affirmative response to this question across the two-week period is coded as 1, 0 otherwise.

Discrimination. We also define three dimensions of discrimination – perceived likelihood of discrimination, concern about discrimination, and any negative ethnic treatment. The perceived likelihood of discrimination is derived from a measure developed by Mendoza-

Denton et al. (2002). Respondents are presented with four situations in which the respondent is potentially being mistreated (e.g., watched by a store clerk in a convenience store). Respondents then indicate the likelihood of such treatment ever occurring to them. Concern about discrimination is measured in response to these same situations. However, in these questions, respondents report how concerned or anxious they would be in each situation. Scores for both of these scales range from one to five and both the likelihood scale and the concern scale possessed good internal consistency, $\alpha = .81$ and $\alpha = .83$ respectively.

Our final dimension of discrimination – any negative ethnic treatment – is measured using our daily diary reports and captures responses to the statement "something bad happened to you or you were treated well because of your race or ethnicity (yes/no). Any affirmative response to this question across the two-week period is coded as 1, 0 otherwise.

Ethnic Identification. Two aspects of cultural identification are considered. First, ethnic affirmation and belonging (e.g., "I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group I belong to," "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group," and "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments") is derived from a subscale of items on the popular Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure developed by Phinney (1992). Second, ethnic identity centrality is measured using an instrument developed by Sellers et al. (1997). Students respond to seven items including "In general, being a member of my ethnic group is an important part of my self-image," "being a part of my ethnic group is an important reflection of who I am," and "being a part of my ethnic group is not a major factor in my social relationships." Scores on both of these scales range from 1 to 5. Both the ethnic affirmation scale and the ethnic centrality scale also possessed good internal consistency, $\alpha = .87$ and $\alpha = .71$ respectively.

Family Obligation. Finally, we consider two measures of youths' sense of duty and obligation to their families. To measure family respect, we use 6 items where students evaluate the importance of respecting parents and older family members, doing well for the sake of the family, and making sacrifices for the family (Fuligni, 1999). To measure the value students place upon supporting their families in the future, we average 6 items on how important they believe it is to help their parents financially in the future, live or go to college near their parents, and help take care of their parents and other family members in the future (Fuligni, 1997). Scores on both of these scales range from 1 to 5. Both the family respect scale and the future support scale also possessed good internal consistency, $\alpha = .77$ and $\alpha = .77$ respectively.

Demographic Control Variables. In our analyses, we evaluate differences by state of residence (NC=1, LA=0) and by a student's foreign born status. Our analyses also control for demographic characteristics of the sample including gender, student's age, parents' education, presence of two-parents in the household.

RESULTS

Academic Motivations in North Carolina and Los Angeles

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine the extent to which adolescents' academic motivations during the 9th grade varied between North Carolina and Los Angeles. In comparison to Latino youth living in LA, Latino youth in North Carolina had a stronger belief in the usefulness of education and reported more intrinsic interest in academics (Table 2). However, students in LA and North Carolina did not differ significantly in their assessments regarding the importance of academic success or the future value of education.

[INSERT TABLE 2]

To determine whether these differences in academic motivation persist after accounting for differences in the demographic composition of adolescents and their families in North Carolina and LA, we regressed each measure of academic motivation on the indicator variable for students living in North Carolina and controlled for students' gender, students' age, family structure, and parents' education (Table 4, part A). We found that differences in the usefulness and intrinsic value of education persisted by state of residence, $F(1,11) = 6.62$ $p < .05$ and $F(1,11) = 7.68$ $p < .05$ respectively.

Effects of Discrimination on Academic Motivations

These differences in academic motivation could potentially be explained by difference in discrimination experienced by youth living in North Carolina and Los Angeles. Using one-way ANOVAs to evaluate these differences, we found that at the same time that students reported higher academic motivations in North Carolina relative to LA, they were also more likely to report being treated poorly because of their race or ethnicity; they perceived a greater likelihood of discrimination in their communities; and they were more concerned or anxious about discrimination (Table 3). Thus, we observed higher rates of academic motivation among Latino youth in North Carolina despite the presence of discrimination.

[INSERT TABLE 3]

To estimate the independent effect of discrimination on academic motivations, we regressed each measure of academic motivation on our three measures of discrimination (Table 4, part B). We found a significant negative association between the perceived likelihood of discrimination and academic motivation with three out of four of our measures, *b*s -.03 to -.04. In contrast, the extent to which students were concerned or anxious about discrimination was positively associated with academic motivation, *b*s .02 to .05. Overall, our three measures of

discrimination were jointly significant in every model except for the model on the future utility of education, $F(3,11) = 6.69$ to $F(3,11) = 4.33$ ps $< .05$. Moreover, with the inclusion of discrimination measures, the coefficient on the indicator variable for North Carolina increased. This suggests that the relatively high levels of discrimination in North Carolina suppressed some of the difference in academic motivation between youth in our two locations. In the absence of discrimination, students in North Carolina would have had even higher academic motivations.

[INSERT TABLE 4]

Effects of Foreign-born Status on Academic Motivations

In comparison to students living in Los Angeles, a greater percentage of Latino youth in North Carolina were first-generation immigrants born abroad to foreign-born parents (67% vs .18%, $\chi^2(1) = 113.45$, $p < .001$). Using one-way ANOVAs, we found that foreign-born youth had significantly higher academic motivations than U.S.-born youth on measures of the usefulness ($M_{FB} = 4.42$; $SD_{FB} = .75$; $M_{US} = 3.92$; $SD_{US} = .79$; $F = 46.68$, $p < .001$) and intrinsic value of education ($M_{FB} = 3.33$; $SD_{FB} = 1.22$; $M_{US} = 2.68$; $SD_{US} = 1.05$; $F = 37.60$, $p < .001$). In comparison to U.S.-born youth, foreign-born youth also reported a greater likelihood of discrimination ($M_{FB} = 6.56$; $SD_{FB} = 4.62$; $M_{US} = 4.75$; $SD_{US} = 4.08$; $F = 19.56$, $p < .001$), concern with discrimination ($M_{FB} = 6.81$; $SD_{FB} = 4.97$; $M_{US} = 5.23$; $SD_{US} = 4.59$; $F = 12.28$, $p < .001$), and prevalence of any negative ethnic treatment (24% vs. 17%, $\chi^2(1) = 3.46$, $p < .10$).

Adding foreign-born status to our regressions on academic motivation (Table 4, part C), we identified significant positive associations between foreign-born status and the usefulness of education ($b = .38$, $F(1,11) = 26.98$ $p < .001$) and between foreign-born status and the intrinsic value of education ($b = .59$, $F(1,11) = 50.90$ $p < .001$). Moreover, the coefficients on the indicator variables for North Carolina decreased 42% and 25%, respectively. Thus, the foreign-

born status of youth explained a substantial portion of the differences in academic motivations between youth living in North Carolina and those living in Los Angeles.

Effects of Social Acceptance on Academic Motivations

[INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]

To evaluate whether differences in social acceptance could explain differences in academic motivations of Latino students living in North Carolina and LA, we again conducted one-way ANOVAs followed by a regression analysis for each measure of academic motivation. The ANOVAs showed that students living in North Carolina, as opposed to Los Angeles, have a greater sense of social acceptance along every dimension that we measure – positive school climate, adult school encouragement, daily positive school experiences, and any positive ethnic treatment (Table 5). The subsequent regression analysis confirmed that positive school climate, adult school encouragement, daily positive school experiences, and any positive ethnic treatment were each associated with greater academic motivation (Table 6, part A). Overall, our four measures of social acceptance were jointly significant in every model, $F(4,11) = 27.16$ to $F(4,11) = 12.63$ $ps < .001$. Moreover, once social acceptance variables were included, the coefficient on the indicator variable for North Carolina became insignificant or reversed its sign and became significantly negative. This suggests that the positive school environments encountered by youth in North Carolina can fully explain their higher academic motivations.

Finally, the coefficients on foreign-born status and the perceived likelihood of discrimination decreased substantially upon the inclusion of social acceptance variables. Thus, social acceptance may mediate the relationships between foreign-born status and academic motivations as well as perceived discrimination and academic motivations. To further evaluate these mediation effects, we followed Baron and Kenney (1986) and regressed foreign-born status

and the perceived likelihood of discrimination on positive school climate. A Sobel test for the significance of mediation confirmed our hypothesis (usefulness: $z_{climate} = 3.24$ $p < .01$, intrinsic value: $z_{climate} = 3.06$ $p < .01$). School climate partially mediated the relationship between foreign-born status and both the usefulness and intrinsic value of education. Again applying the Sobel test, we found that the school climate also fully mediated the relationship between the perceived discrimination and three dimensions of academic motivation (importance: $z_{climate} = 4.18$ $p < .001$, usefulness: $z_{climate} = 8.25$ $p < .001$, intrinsic value: $z_{climate} = 6.23$ $p < .001$). Students who perceived a higher likelihood of discrimination tended to evaluate the school climate more poorly and the poor school climate was, in turn, associated with lower academic motivation.

[INSERT TABLE 6 HERE]

Effects of Ethnic Identification and Family Obligation on Academic Motivations

ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences in the ethnic identifications and levels of family obligation between youth living in North Carolina and Los Angeles (Table 5). Latino youth in North Carolina reported significantly higher levels of both ethnic affirmation and belonging, and ethnic centrality than were reported by Latino youth in Los Angeles. Additionally, Latino youth in North Carolina reported significantly higher levels of family respect and obligations to support their families in the future.

To evaluate the independent effects of ethnic identification and family obligation on academic motivations, we estimated regressions (Table 6, parts B and C). Ethnic affirmation and belonging was weakly associated with the importance and the intrinsic value of education (bs = .16, .20 ps < .10). However, it was strongly associated with both the usefulness of education ($b = .19$ $p < .05$) and its future value ($b = .15$ $p < .001$). Due to the high correlations between ethnic affirmation and belonging and ethnic centrality ($r = .67$), the significant

associations between academic motivations and a students' sense of ethnic centrality was not identified in the regression framework. However, correlation analyses demonstrated a notable link between ethnic centrality and three aspects of academic motivation – importance of school (r = .14), usefulness of education (r = .24), and intrinsic value of education (r = .11).

Family respect was strongly associated with all our outcomes – importance (b = .34 p < .001), usefulness (b = .26 p < .001), future value (b = .23 p < .001), and intrinsic value (b = .25 p < .05) of education. In contrast, family support was only significantly associated with the usefulness of education (b = .14 p < .05). The weak relationship between family support and academic motivations in our regression models may be partially explained by the high correlation between family support and family respect (r = .66). Correlation analyses demonstrated that adolescents who believed they should support their families placed a stronger value on achieving academic success (r = .32), the usefulness of education (r = .38), the future value of education(r = .22), and the intrinsic value of education (r = .33).

Through additional regression analyses and Sobel tests for mediation, we found that the relationships between ethnic belonging and both the usefulness and future value of education were fully mediated through school climate (usefulness: $z_{climate}$ = 4.70 p < .001, future value: $z_{climate}$ = 3.89 p < .001). Thus, students with a strong sense of ethnic affirmation and belonging tended to report more positive school experiences which, in turn, were associated with stronger academic motivations. Similarly, we found that the relationships between family respect and each measure of academic motivation was partially mediated through school climate (importance: $z_{climate}$ = 2.85 p < .01, usefulness: $z_{climate}$ = 4.13 p < .001, future value: $z_{climate}$ = 3.35 p < .001, intrinsic value: $z_{climate}$ = 3.97 p < .001). Students with a strong sense of family respect tended to report more positive school climate and this positive school climate was associated

with greater academic motivation. In Table 7, we show the full regression models and report standardized coefficients.

[INSERT TABLE 7]

DISCUSSION

In what has sometimes been referred to as a new Latino Diaspora (Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002), Latino families have been moving to areas of the U.S. where they had little or no historical presence. This Diaspora provides researchers with the opportunity to evaluate how the social contexts of emerging versus long-standing Latino communities affect the development of Latino youth. Given the importance of education to the socioeconomic mobility of Latino youth and the increasing size of the Latino population in the U.S., policy makers are increasingly interested in understanding and reversing their low educational attainment. Some have argued that their education attainment is low because they place a low premium on education (Valencia and Black 2002). Therefore, we studied the specific academic values and beliefs that motivate Latino adolescents to perform well and stay in school.

In our comparison of Latino youth living in North Carolina and Los Angeles, we found youth living in both communities had high academic motivations, but the motivations of youth in North Carolina were higher. At the same time, youth in North Carolina reported experiencing more discrimination and worried more about the likelihood of discrimination in their every day lives. Though these discriminatory experiences negatively affected their school experiences and academic motivations, Latino youth in North Carolina proved to be remarkably resilient. They faced the threat of discrimination, overcame it, and continued to show an extraordinary motivation to excel in their academic pursuits. As evidenced by the positive relationship between concerns about discrimination (as opposed to the likelihood or experience of

discrimination) and academic motivations, some students even used their fears to further motivate themselves. Perhaps knowing that discrimination could potentially constrain their economic opportunities, they chose to combat it by delving into their school work and proving their potential. As a result, they did not fall into the trap, identified by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) in their studies of African-American youth, of developing oppositional identities that undermined their academic success in the presence of discrimination. So, what explains the high academic motivations of Latino youth in North Carolina?

The high academic motivations of youth in North Carolina reflected, in part, their immigrant status. On average, foreign-born youth, in contrast to U.S.-born youth, enjoyed going to school and working on their school work. Moreover, they strongly believed that the things they learned in school were useful and would help them succeed in life. This result is consistent with previous research on academic aspirations and expectations showing that the first-generation children of immigrants have higher academic aspirations and expectations than their third-generation peers (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Kao & Tienda, 1995). It also lends support to the immigrant optimism hypothesis and research on immigrant's dual-frame-of-reference (Ogbu, 1991; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant youth and their families move to the U.S. to build a better future and improve upon the opportunities available to them in their home countries. Thus, they expect to overcome, not fall victim to, their relatively low socioeconomic status in the U.S. and their parents' limited educational backgrounds.

The high academic motivations of youth in North Carolina also reflected their positive school experiences. Even though youth experienced discrimination both at school and in their communities, daily positive experiences, positive treatment by peers at school, and encouragement by teachers and other adults at their schools counterbalanced these negative

experiences and fostered a generally positive school climate. Therefore, our results strongly suggest that school climate cannot only affects academic achievement directly (Stone & Han, 2005), but also that it can affect academic achievement indirectly by increasing academic motivations and reaffirming immigrant students' strong academic values and beliefs.

Finally, a strong sense of family obligation and ethnic identification contributed to individual differences in academic motivations. As previous studies have demonstrated, Latino youth exhibit a high degree of loyalty and commitment to their families (Fuligni, 2001; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999) and one of the primary ways that they can demonstrate respect for their parents and the sacrifices made by their parents is to succeed in school. Thus, family respect strongly motivates their academic endeavors along every dimension – importance, usefulness, future value, and intrinsic value of education. Furthermore, a strong sense of ethnic affirmation and belonging helped to motivate Latino youth by improving their perceptions of the school environment. Youth who were proud of their heritage were more likely to feel respected at school and this translated into higher academic motivations.

As one of the first studies comparing the academic experiences of youth in an emerging and a long-standing Latino community, this study contributes substantially to research on the social context of immigrant adaptation. To further expand our understanding of social context and immigrant adaptation, additional studies with comparable quantitative and ethnographic data on emerging and long-standing communities should be undertaken. School board, housing, English-language only, community college admission, and licensure policies enacted at state and local levels can influence the educational progress of youth, their health, and their overall economic well-being. Thus, to better design policies that facilitate the adaptation of immigrant youth, studies with sufficient variation across community contexts are needed.

Additional studies should follow Latino students and other students from immigrant families as they transition through adolescence into adulthood in emerging immigrant and Latino communities. To the extent that social contexts shape development, the educational and economic trajectories of youth growing up in emerging immigrant communities could differ quite substantially from the trajectories of their peers in communities with a tradition of receiving and accommodating new immigrants. While the Diaspora of Latinos and immigrants creates a challenge for policy makers and schools, it also creates an opportunity. Schools can actively work to foster a sense of belonging among immigrants, facilitate their transitions to the U.S., and, in so doing, motivate them to succeed and to realize their full potential.

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Latino Students in NC and LA

	NC			LA				
	N	%/M	(SD)	N	M/%	(SD)	T or χ2	
Student Characteristics								
Females	116	55%	---	125	50%	---	1.15	
Age (mean)	210	15.32	(0.86)	249	14.84	(0.38)	-7.61	***
Generational Status								
First Generation	140	67%	---	43	18%	---	113.45	***
Second Generation	62	30%	---	140	57%	---	34.94	***
Third Generation	8	4%	---	62	25%	---	40.14	***
Country of birth								
United States	66	31%	---	206	85%	---	136.95	***
Mexican	77	37%	---	23	10%	---	47.84	***
Central American or Carribean	47	22%	---	6	2%	---	42.81	***
South American	20	10%	---	6	2%	---	10.22	***
Age at arrival								
Born in U.S.	66	31%	---	206	85%	---	135.27	***
Under age 6	27	13%	---	20	8%	---	2.55	
Ages 6-12	71	34%	---	14	6%	---	57.83	***
Ages 13 or more	46	22%	---	2	1%	---	52.63	***
Speaks and understands English very well	86	42%	---	203	82%	---	77.78	***
Reads and writes English very well	76	38%	---	163	66%	---	35.3	***
Speaks and understands Spanish very well	131	68%	---	81	39%	---	35.39	***
Reads and writes Spanish very well	85	44%	---	39	19%	---	31.05	***
Family Characteristics								
Lives with two parents	121	58%	---	148	59%	---	0.16	
Both parents employed	113	61%	---	138	64%	---	0.34	
Parent graduated high school	102	49%	---	191	77%	---	39.06	***
Number of family in household (mean)	210	3.92	(1.99)	249	3.49	(1.77)	-2.42	*
English spoken at home	119	60%	---	223	90%	---	57.28	***
English primary language spoken at home	33	17%	---	135	55%	---	70.45	***
Spanish spoken at home	183	91%	---	206	83%	---	6.12	*

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

NOTE: T-tests using the sattertwaite adjustment for unequal variances were used to compare differences in means. Chi-square tests were used to compare differences in proportions. Second and third-generation youth include a small number born abroad to U.S. citizens.

Table 2. Academic Motivations of Latino Students in North Carolina and Los Angeles

	NC		LA			
	M	**(SD)**	**M**	**(SD)**	**F**	
Importance of Academic Success	4.10	(0.81)	4.13	(0.70)	0.12	
Usefulness of Education	4.35	(0.79)	3.93	(0.78)	34.01	***
Future Value of Education	4.52	(0.67)	4.58	(0.61)	1.23	
Intrinsic Value of Education	3.17	(1.28)	2.75	(1.03)	15.53	***
	N=210		N=249			

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
NOTE: One-way analysis of variance was used to compare differences in means.

Table 3. Mean Differences in Discrimination of Latino Students in North Carolina and Los Angeles

	NC		LA			
	M/%	**(SD)**	**M/%**	**(SD)**	**F or χ2**	
Perceived Likelihood of Discrimination	6.80	(4.57)	4.37	(3.92)	37.5	***
Concern about Discrimination	6.66	(5.01)	5.21	(4.53)	10.58	**
Any Negative Ethnic Treatment (%)	27%	---	13%	---	13.11	***
	N=210		N=249			

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
NOTE: One-way analysis of variance was used to compare differences in means. Chi-square tests were used to compare differences in proportions.

Table 4. Effects of State of Residence, Discrimination, and Foreign-born Status on Academic Motivation (N=449)

	(1) Importance of Academic Success		(2) Usefulness of Education		(3) Future Value of Education		(4) Intrinsic Value of Education	
	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)
A. Baseline								
North Carolina	0.00	(0.11)	0.34	(0.12) *	-0.09	(0.07)	0.29	(0.11) *
R^2	0.01		0.10		0.02		0.07	
B. Discrimination Experiences								
North Carolina	0.03	(0.11)	0.38	(0.11) **	-0.07	(0.08)	0.32	(0.11) *
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.10	(0.16)	-0.05	(0.14)	0.03	(0.09)	0.10	(0.13)
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.03	(0.01) *	-0.03	(0.01) *	-0.02	(0.01)	-0.04	(0.02) *
Concern about discrimination	0.04	(0.01) **	0.03	(0.01) **	0.02	(0.01) *	0.05	(0.01) **
R^2	0.05		0.12		0.05		0.09	
C. Foreign-Born								
North Carolina	-0.03	(0.10)	0.22	(0.09) *	-0.09	(0.09)	0.08	(0.11)
Foreign-born	0.15	(0.10)	0.38	(0.07) ***	0.06	(0.05)	0.59	(0.08) ***
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.09	(0.16)	-0.04	(0.13)	0.03	(0.09)	0.12	(0.12)
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.03	(0.01) *	-0.03	(0.01) **	-0.02	(0.01)	-0.04	(0.02) *
Concern about discrimination	0.03	(0.01) **	0.03	(0.01) **	0.02	(0.01) *	0.04	(0.01) *
R^2	0.05		0.16		0.05		0.14	

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Note: Regressions include additional controls for students' sex, age, living in a two-parent family, having at least one parent with a high school degree, and an indicator variable for missing values on parent education. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering at the school-level.

Table 5. Mean Differences in Social Acceptance, Ethnic Identification, and Family Obligation among Latino Students in North Carolina and Los Angeles

	NC		LA			
	M	**(SD)**	**M**	**(SD)**		**F or χ2**
Social Acceptance						
Positive School Climate	3.78	(1.06)	3.40	(0.94)	**	16.00
Adult School Encouragement	4.04	(1.08)	3.79	(1.14)	*	5.74
Daily Positive School Experiences	44.81	(5.05)	32.68	(5.17)	***	639.71
Any Positive Ethnic Treatment (%)	39%	---	18%	---	***	29.78
Ethnic Identification						
Ethnic affirmation and belonging	4.49	(0.68)	3.96	(0.91)	***	48.32
Ethnic centrality	3.80	(0.78)	3.24	(0.91)	***	50.82
Family Obligation						
Family respect	4.08	(0.64)	3.92	(0.76)	*	6.36
Future support	3.73	(0.82)	3.45	(0.87)	**	12.49
	N=210		N=249			

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

NOTE: One-way analysis of variance was used to compare differences in means. Chi-square tests were used to compare differences in proportions.

Table 6. Effects of Social Acceptance, Ethnic Identification, and Family Obligations on Academic Motivation (N=449)

	(1) Importance of Academic Success		(2) Usefulness of Education		(3) Future Value of Education		(4) Intrinsic Value of Education	
	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)
A. Social Acceptance								
North Carolina	-0.29	(0.11) *	-0.07	(0.12)	-0.19	(0.10)	-0.52	(0.13) **
Foreign-born	0.02	(0.10)	0.19	(0.06) **	-0.01	(0.06)	0.41	(0.08) ***
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.12	(0.12)	-0.08	(0.10)	0.03	(0.07)	0.13	(0.08)
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.02	(0.02)
Concern about discrimination	0.03	(0.01) *	0.02	(0.01) *	0.02	(0.01) †	0.03	(0.01) †
Positive School Climate	0.19	(0.05) **	0.32	(0.05) ***	0.14	(0.03) **	0.28	(0.06) ***
Adult School Encouragement	0.05	(0.03)	0.08	(0.02) **	0.06	(0.03) *	0.04	(0.02)
Daily Positive School Experiences	0.02	(0.01) *	0.01	(0.01) †	0.00	(0.01)	0.04	(0.01) **
Any Positive Ethnic Treatment	0.18	(0.09) †	0.23	(0.08) *	0.04	(0.08)	0.23	(0.11)
R^2	0.17		0.38		0.12		0.26	
B. Ethnic Identification								
North Carolina	-0.11	(0.12)	0.14	(0.10)	-0.13	(0.10)	0.03	(0.07)
Foreign-born	0.11	(0.10)	0.33	(0.06) ***	0.02	(0.06)	0.55	(0.08) ***
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.05	(0.14)	0.00	(0.11)	0.06	(0.08)	0.15	(0.11)
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.03	(0.01) *	-0.03	(0.01) **	-0.02	(0.01)	-0.04	(0.02) *
Concern about discrimination	0.03	(0.01) *	0.02	(0.01) *	0.02	(0.01) †	0.04	(0.02) *
Ethnic affirmation and belonging	0.16	(0.08) †	0.19	(0.08) *	0.15	(0.03) ***	0.20	(0.10) †
Ethnic centrality	0.04	(0.06)	0.03	(0.06)	-0.03	(0.04)	-0.07	(0.09)
R^2	0.09		0.20		0.08		0.15	
C. Family Obligation								
North Carolina	-0.10	(0.08)	0.16	(0.09)	-0.13	(0.08)	0.00	(0.11)
Foreign-born	0.11	(0.10)	0.34	(0.07) ***	0.04	(0.05)	0.54	(0.07)
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.03	(0.13)	0.01	(0.11)	0.07	(0.08)	0.18	(0.12)
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.02	(0.01) †	-0.02	(0.01) *	-0.02	(0.01)	-0.03	(0.02) †
Concern about discrimination	0.02	(0.01) †	0.02	(0.01)	0.02	(0.01)	0.03	(0.01) *
Family respect	0.34	(0.05) ***	0.26	(0.04) ***	0.23	(0.05) ***	0.25	(0.10) *
Future support	0.10	(0.06)	0.14	(0.05) *	0.04	(0.04)	0.22	(0.11) †
R^2	0.20		0.27		0.13		0.21	

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Note: Regressions include additional controls for students' sex, age, living in a two-parent family, having at least one parent with a high school degree, and an indicator variable for missing values on parent education. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering at the school-level.

Table 7. Full Regressions on Academic Motivation (N=459)

	(1) Importance of Academic Success		(2) Usefulness of Education		(3) Future Value of Education		(4) Intrinsic Value of Education	
	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)	b	(s.e.)
North Carolina	-0.29	(0.10) *	-0.06	(0.11)	-0.19	(0.09) *	-0.47	(0.13) **
	-{0.19}		-{0.04}		-{0.15}		-{0.20}	
Foreign born	0.02	(0.09)	0.18	(0.06) **	-0.02	(0.05)	0.39	(0.08) **
	{0.01}		{0.11}		-{0.01}		{0.16}	
Discrimination								
Perceived liklihood of discrimination	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.02)
	-{0.06}		-{0.04}		-{0.09}		-{0.05}	
Concern about discrimination	0.02	(0.01) †	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.02	(0.01) †
	{0.12}		{0.06}		{0.10}		{0.09}	
Any negative ethnic treatment	-0.06	(0.11)	-0.04	(0.08)	0.07	(0.07)	0.16	(0.10)
	-{0.03}		-{0.02}		{0.04}		{0.05}	
Social Acceptance								
Positive school climate	0.12	(0.04) *	0.27	(0.05) ***	0.10	(0.03) **	0.23	(0.05) **
	{0.17}		{0.34}		{0.16}		{0.20}	
Adult school encouragement	0.04	(0.03)	0.07	(0.02) *	0.05	(0.03) †	0.04	(0.02)
	{0.06}		{0.10}		{0.09}		{0.03}	
Daily positive school experiences	0.01	(0.01) *	0.01	(0.01)	0.00	(0.01)	0.04	(0.01) **
	{0.13}		{0.11}		{0.03}		{0.26}	
Any positive ethnic treatment	0.17	(0.10)	0.22	(0.09) *	0.03	(0.07)	0.22	(0.10) †
	{0.10}		{0.12}		{0.02}		{0.09}	
Ethnic Identification								
Ethnic affirmation and belonging	0.03	(0.07)	0.02	(0.06)	0.06	(0.04)	0.03	(0.08)
	{0.03}		{0.03}		{0.08}		{0.02}	
Ethnic centrality	0.00	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)	-0.05	(0.05)	-0.12	(0.08)
	{0.00}		{0.00}		-{0.07}		-{0.10}	
Family Obligation								
Family respect	0.28	(0.05) ***	0.16	(0.03) ***	0.19	(0.05) **	0.18	(0.10) †
	{0.27}		{0.14}		{0.21}		{0.11}	
Future support	0.07	(0.06)	0.10	(0.05) *	0.03	(0.04)	0.18	(0.10) †
	{0.08}		{0.10}		{0.04}		{0.13}	
R^2	0.26		0.43		0.17		0.29	

† p<.10, * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Note: Regressions include additional controls for students' sex, age, living in a two-parent family, having at least one parent with a high school degree, and an indicator variable for missing values on parent education. Standard errors are adjusted for clustering at the school-level. Standardize coefficients (BETAS) are reported in brackets underneath the unstandardized coefficients.