Being Well and Doing Well: The Health and Academic Experiences of Latino High School Students in North Carolina

Stephanie Potochnick

Dr. Krista Perreira

UNC Chapel Hill Department of Public Policy

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Southern Immigrant Academic Adaptation Study (SIAA)

- Daily Acculturation Experiences of Latino Youth:
  - Variability by psychosocial factors (e.g. gender, family values, school orientations, and work orientations)
  - Influence on academic engagement and performance
  - Influence on mental health
  - Traditional receiving community (L.A.) vs. new receiving community (N.C.)
SIAA Data

- **Sample**
  - 239 North Carolina 9th grade students from the 2006-2007 school year
  - 4 urban schools and 5 rural schools
- **Data: Mixed Methods**
  - 45-minute in school survey
    - immigration histories, SES, language use, family relationships, ethnic identification, educational attitudes, mental health
  - Supplementary take home survey
  - Daily diary checklist
    - Daily events, stressors, mental health, activities
  - Qualitative interviews of 20 youth and caregivers
Overview of Study Participants

- **Student Characteristics**
  - 70% foreign born
    - 54% from Mexico; 33% C.A./Caribbean
    - 64% arrived before 13 years old
  - 11% third generation

- **Family Characteristics**
  - 57% 2-parent household; avg. HH size=4
  - 48% at least one parent has a HS degree
  - 60% both parents employed

- **Language Characteristics**
  - 16% English is primary home language
  - 59% English is spoken in the home
School Aspirations and Expectations

Figure 1. Student Academic Aspirations by Nativity Status

- Foreign Born
- U.S. Born

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
<th>U.S. Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finish Some High School</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate High School</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate 2-yr College</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate 4-yr College</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Aspirations and Expectations

Figure 2. Comparison of Student and Parent Academic Aspirations to Student Academic Expectations

- Student Aspirations
- Parent Aspirations
- Student Expectations

Aspirations and Expectations Breakdown:
- Finish Some High School
- Graduate High School
- Graduate 2-yr College
- Graduate 4-yr College
- Graduate Degree
Challenges to School Success:
School Climate

Figure 3. School Belonging and Identification by Nativity Status

- Foreign Born
- U.S. Born

Categories:
- Poor
- Satisfactory
- Excellent
Figure 4. Family Economic Hardship in the Past 12 Months by Nativity Status

- **Food Concerns**: Foreign Born (25%) vs. U.S. Born (20%)
- **Without Phone**: Foreign Born (20%) vs. U.S. Born (15%)
- **Short on Rent**: Foreign Born (15%) vs. U.S. Born (10%)
- **Electric, Gas, Water Services Cut**: Foreign Born (7%) vs. U.S. Born (5%)
- **Evicted**: Foreign Born (1%) vs. U.S. Born (2%)
Challenges to School Success: Family Obligations

Figure 5. Family Obligations by Nativity Status

- Help Take Care of Family Members
- Spend Free Time Helping around the House
- Parents Need Help with Finances
- Distractions at Home Make It Hard to Study
- Responsibilities Get in the Way of Schoolwork

- Foreign Born
- U.S. Born
Challenges to School Success: Negative Racial Treatment

Figure 6. Experienced Discrimination in the Past Two Weeks by Country of Birth
Challenges to School Success: Positive Racial Treatment

Figure 7. Experienced Positive Racial Treatment in the Past Two Weeks by Country of Birth
Factors Promoting School Success: Ethnic Community

Figure 8. Ethnic Identity by Nativity Status

- Country of Origin Ethnicity
- Pan-Ethnicity
- Hyphenated-American

Legend:
- Foreign Born
- U.S. Born
Factors Promoting School Success: Family Support

Figure 9. Family Identity Indicators by Nativity Status

- Family Important to Self-Worth
- Personally Belong to Family
- Parents Respect My Work
- Parents Value Me as a Family Member

Foreign Born vs. U.S. Born
Factors Promoting School Success: Teacher Support

Figure 10. Relationships with Adults in School by Nativity Status

- Poor
- Satisfactory
- Excellent

Foreign Born vs. U.S. Born
Conclusions

• Foreign and Native Born Students are Highly Motivated to Achieve
  – Lower expectations that will achieve goals

• Multiple Challenges to Academic Success
  – School climate, economic hardships, family obligations, perceived discrimination

• Multiple Support Systems to Minimize Stressors
  – Ethnic community, family support, teacher support
Conclusions: Familial Resiliency

- And with the eldest we had problems because the eldest didn’t have anyone to help him and the middle one has the older one to help him. But the eldest didn’t have anyone to help him and he said to me, ay, mami, look, help me, tell me what it says here, what does it say? But well since I didn’t go to school I didn’t know what it said and I don’t know, I don’t know very much, oh, I don’t know how to help him. So we cried together at the table doing the homework. Because he cried because he couldn’t do it and I wanted him to do it, and he couldn’t do it. So we cried together at the table because I couldn’t help him and I didn’t understand and now that he’s older and now it’s a little more. And he helps the middle one.
Additional Information

- SIAA Website
  - http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/siaa