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Integrating Hispanic Immigrant Youth: Perspectives from White and Black Americans in Emerging Hispanic Communities and Schools

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Abstract

Acculturation is bidirectional and includes not only the process of Hispanics adaptation to US culture(s) but also the process of US cultural adaptations to Hispanics. However, few studies of Hispanic adolescent adaptation have examined the ways in which US society accommodates or fails to accommodate its Hispanic immigrant populations. Our study addresses this gap by examining the ways in which non-Hispanic students, parents, and teachers in an emerging Hispanic community have acculturated to the Hispanic adolescents in their community. This study utilizes focus-group data from the Southern Immigrant Academic Adaptation (SIAA) study -- a multi-site, high school-based study conducted in North Carolina between 2006 and 2010. We held 34 focus groups with 139 participants from two rural and two urban high schools. In each community, at least seven focus groups were conducted to include non-Hispanics: (1) black female and male students, (2) black parents, (3) white female and male students, (4) white parents, and (5) high school teachers. In each school, we identified different modes of incorporation linked with receiving-community acculturation strategies that included varying degrees of accommodation of heritage cultures and languages as well as cultural exchanges ranging from inclusionary to exclusionary.

Keywords

Hispanic/Latino; Immigrant; Acculturation; Assimilation; Education; Inter-group Relations

INTRODUCTION

As the US Hispanic population began to settle outside of states with historically large Hispanic populations, multiple studies examined how Hispanic adolescents adapted or acculturated as they interacted with long-time residents in Emerging Hispanic Communities (EHC) (Green et al. 2016, Ko and Perreira 2010, Brietzke and Perreira 2017, Silver 2018). However, there is another facet of acculturation that is largely neglected. Acculturation is, by definition, bidirectional which includes not only the process of Hispanic adaptation to US

culture(s) but also the process of cultural adaptations to Hispanics made by existing cultural groups within EHCs (Berry 2002). New assimilation theories also highlight the bidirectional nature of assimilation processes and emphasize the possibility that immigrant-origin populations will influence the host society (Alba 2005; Jiménez and Horowitz 2013; Orum 2005).

Nevertheless, few studies of Hispanic adolescent adaptation have examined the ways in which EHCs adapt to or fail to adapt to new Hispanic residents. Our study addresses this gap by examining how non-Hispanic white and black students, parents, and teachers in North Carolina's (NC) high schools have acculturated to the Hispanic adolescents in their communities, most of whom are first (i.e. foreign-born with foreign-born parents) and second-generation (i.e. US-born with foreign-born parents) children of immigrants. Treating acculturation as a two-way process, our study aims to: (1) explore non-Hispanics' perceptions of and attitudes towards Hispanics across different population segments (i.e., adolescents, parents and teachers), (2) describe how non-Hispanic students, parents, and teachers interact with Hispanic newcomers in their schools and communities, and (3) understand the systems and structures that assist or deter Hispanics' adaptation to their communities.

We focus on NC as the fastest growing EHC between 1990 and 2000 when the Hispanic population settled in rural and urban areas throughout the state and grew 394% from 76,726 to 378,963 (Guzmán 2000). We further focus on high school students in 2007-08 – a year in which the school enrollment of Hispanic foreign-born youth neared its peak. By 2007-08, approximately 33,000 Hispanic youth were enrolled in the state's high schools and 40 percent of these Hispanic youth were foreign-born (US Census 2008). Nationally, both the adoption of local immigration enforcement agreements (called 287(g) agreements) and noncriminal removals by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) also peaked in 2007-08. Between 148,000-158,000 persons without criminal records (44-46% of all deportations) were deported by ICE from the interior of the US (Rosenblum and McCabe 2017). Many communities within NC, an early adopter of 287(g) agreements, had become increasingly hostile towards immigrants (Gill 2010, Silver 2018). The high prevalence of noncriminal deportations through local immigration enforcement efforts left many youth and their families feeling particularly vulnerable.

Within this context, we argue that NC's schools were the most important institutional environment in the socialization and adaptation of Hispanic foreign-born and US-born youth (Perreira et al. 2010, Parrado and Kandel 2006). Schools exposed youth to different cultural groups, shaped co-ethnic interactions, and influenced youth's beliefs about what society and persons outside of their family expect from them. Schools also provided opportunities for parents and teachers from different cultures to interact. Moreover, policies and practices within schools established norms and expectations that influenced how newcomers were welcomed (or not) by peers, parents, and teachers from different cultural backgrounds.

To understand the context of reception for Hispanic youth, we argue that it is essential to understand the attitudes, behaviors and practices of non-Hispanic students, parents, and teachers in the school system. Although federal and state-level policies shape the

institutional landscapes of the US, schools refract these policies and create micro-contexts for reception which reflect the availability of resources across schools, the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition of each school, and the history of racial/ethnic relations in each school and its surrounding community.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Three theoretical frameworks inform our analysis – acculturation theory, new assimilation theory, and theories on prejudice and intergroup relations. We anchor our research in Berry's (2003) conceptualizations of acculturation as a bi-directional process and the recognition that modes of incorporation (i.e. institutional and cultural reactions to immigrant groups) can shape immigrant assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Using Berry's framework, we classify schools along two dimensions – degree of cultural inclusion by non-Hispanic US-born natives and degree of accommodation of heritage cultures and identities. Arrayed along these two dimensions, the modes of incorporation adopted by schools and the individual acculturation strategies adopted by students, parents, and teachers within a school can vary tremendously. First, schools can combine accommodations to facilitate the maintenance of heritage cultures by newcomers with substantial opportunities for cross-cultural interactions that facilitate learning and understanding of host community cultures. Second, schools can pursue cultural inclusion without accommodation, expecting newcomers to give up their cultural heritage as they embrace and adopt the values of the dominant cultural group in the receiving community. Third, schools can promote cultural separation with accommodations to facilitate cultural maintenance. Newcomers may be allowed to maintain their cultural heritage while also being discouraged from interacting with the dominant cultural group due to neighborhood socioeconomic segregation, linguistic classroom segregation, or overt racial/ethnic discrimination. Lastly, schools can expect newcomers to give up their cultural heritage and adopt the behaviors and practices of the dominant group while also excluding them from full participation in the civic life of the receiving communities. In some cases, these exclusions may be forced or codified by law.

Complementing Berry's work, new assimilation theory argues that adaptations of immigrants to their new homes will be shaped by “institutional mechanisms of monitoring and enforcement” that either “brighten” or “blur” social boundaries between racial/ethnic groups (Alba 2005). Boundaries can become bright when institutional mechanism (e.g., local immigration enforcement efforts, English-only laws) strengthen the power and authority of one group while diminishing another. Boundaries can become blurred when institutional mechanisms (e.g., translated public documents) promote equal rights, mutual respect, shared understanding, and shared control. Blurred boundaries provide opportunities for newcomers to modify the cultural mainstream, whereas brightened boundaries limit these opportunities and change might only be possible through collective resistance (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement).

These institutional mechanisms can be shaped by historical race/ethnic relations and community prejudices (Fussell 2014). The threat hypothesis suggests that white and black Americans will view Hispanics, especially immigrants, as either a cultural, political, or economic threat. The threat perception may be amplified in communities where Hispanic

populations have grown rapidly and/or where there is greater competition for scarce resources (e.g., jobs). The contact hypothesis takes a more positive view of intergroup contact, suggesting that positive interactions between groups will decrease prejudice and promote mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect. Thus, positive attitudes towards Hispanic newcomers should grow over time and the context of reception should become more welcoming or accommodating. Previous research in NC supports both viewpoints (McClain et al. 2007; Marrow 2008; O'Neil and Tienda 2010; Watson and Riffe 2013).

Based on these theoretical considerations, we hypothesize that the attitudes, behaviors, and practices of students, parents, and teachers will reflect varying degrees of accommodation and cultural inclusion which either brighten or blur social boundaries in each school. Furthermore, the degree of accommodation and cultural inclusion will vary across schools depending on the availability of resources in each school, the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition of each school, and the history of racial/ethnic relations in each school and its surrounding community. Schools in urban areas with higher SES whites and fewer resource constraints will feel less threatened by Hispanic newcomers and will be more inclusive and accommodating of different cultural viewpoints. In contrast, schools in rural areas with lower SES white and black Americans and greater resource constraints will feel more threatened by Hispanic newcomers and will tend to be less inclusive or accommodating.

METHODS

Data

This study utilizes focus-group data from the Southern Immigrant Academic Adaptation study (SIAA) -- a study of nine high schools randomly selected from urban-rural strata with a probability proportional to the number of Hispanic students enrolled in 9th grade (see online supplement for additional details). From among these nine high schools participating in the study, two rural and two urban schools were randomly selected to participate in the focus group arm of the study. The four schools selected represented four of the five school districts participating in the study and reflect the diverse geographic settlement of Hispanics in North Carolina. Across the schools, we held 34 focus groups with 139 non-Hispanic participants in 2007-08. In each school, at least seven focus groups were conducted with non-Hispanic: (1) teachers, (2) black female adolescents, (3) white female adolescents, (4) black male adolescents, (5) white male adolescents, (6) black parents, and (7) white parents.

We organized student and parent focus groups by sex and race/ethnicity to facilitate open conversation about stereotypes and racial dynamics (Hollander 2004). All focus groups followed an open-ended discussion guide and most were conducted by a research team member of the same racial background (see online supplement). Focus groups lasted between 45-90 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Participants received \$15 gift cards for participating.

Schools and Participants

According to data from the NC Department of Public Instruction, the four schools in which focus groups were conducted differed substantially along several dimensions (Table 1, Panel A, data rounded to protect school identities). In particular, there were clear racial and economic differences between rural and urban schools. School 1 was an urban magnet school attracting white families into a more racially/ethnically mixed community. School 2 was urban, majority white, and had few Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch (FRPL) students. School 3 was rural and our poorest school with a relatively large white population and 70% FRPL students. School 4 was rural, majority black with 60% FRPL students. Consequently rural-urban location differences intersected with race and class differences across schools. Among 9th-grade Hispanic students enrolled in these schools (see online supplement), school climates were evaluated most positively by Hispanic students in School 1, reports of encouragement by adults were highest in School 2, and perceptions of discrimination were highest in Schools 3 and 4.

Table 1, panel B describes focus group participants. Age ranges for students were 13-18, and for parents and teachers 24-57. Most participants (64%) were born in NC and identified as non-Hispanic white (47%) or black (46%). Participants had diverse immigration views, according to preliminary questionnaires (see online supplement). They were evenly divided between those who felt immigrants strengthened the country (35%); burdened the country (30%); and, had no opinion (32%). Though not statistically significant, participants from rural (School 3 and 4) versus urban (Schools 1 and 2) schools viewed immigrants more negatively.

Analysis

The research team conducted preliminary analysis concurrently with data collection (Miles and Huberman 1994). Following each focus group, we discussed what we learned and generated an iterative list of emerging themes and codes. Then, we coded transcripts independently using Atlas.ti Version 6.0 and compared and reconciled coding and identified important subthemes. Next, we identified and mapped conceptual links between themes, examined variations and patterns in each theme across schools, and evaluated patterns and variations within themes by race, gender, and population segment (teachers, parents, and students). Each layer of analysis lent a greater degree of complexity and different viewpoints.

Our research team consisted of US-born and foreign-born Hispanics and non-Hispanic Blacks and Whites. Although the language used by some focus group participants was distressing and hurtful to team members, the team valued the opportunity to understand other perspectives. The portrait that emerges is at times uncomfortable and yet provides important insights into the reception that Hispanic youth encounter.

RESULTS

To learn how participants were adapting to the growing Hispanic population, our focus group discussions sought participants' descriptions of their community's *attitudes* towards

Hispanics, *behaviors* or interactions with Hispanics, and information on school practices or *accommodations* for Hispanics (Berry 2003). These three factors worked together to define acculturation strategies adopted by peers, parents, and teachers and how Hispanic students were incorporated into school in each receiving-community. *Attitudes* reflected beliefs about Hispanics degree of threat to their communities, ability to function successfully in their communities, and expected ways of behavior. *Behaviors* reflected depictions of interpersonal interactions with Hispanics and widespread practices that shaped these interactions. *Accommodations* reflected descriptions of formal and informal systems (e.g., physical/organization structure of the school; school policies/programs; and resource allocations) that could assist or deter Hispanic adaptation.

Our analysis (organized by school) revealed substantial variation in the strategies of immigrant incorporation adopted within each school. Though no school could be characterized as pursuing a high degree of cultural inclusion without accommodation or cultural exclusion with accommodation, Figure 1 shows that the degree of cultural inclusion and accommodation of heritage cultures varied tremendously within schools. At the same time, it shows that cultural inclusion appeared to go hand in hand with accommodation.

School 1: Cultural Inclusion with Accommodation

School 1, our most inclusive and accommodating school, is characterized as striving towards multiculturalism. Set in an urban community, many of its students, parents, and teachers had relocated from other states, drawn by the low cost of living and employment opportunities in business, healthcare and education. According to parents, job availability and affordable housing reduced racial tensions in the city as every racial/ethnic group benefited from economic growth. Neighborhoods, however, remained ethnically/racially separated. Moreover, parents and teachers believed that district school choice policies perpetuated racial/ethnic separation, as families gravitated towards racially/ethnically homogenous schools. Participants viewed their high school as an exception. It was large, racially/ethnically and economically diverse, and strived to be culturally aware and inclusive.

Community.—Exemplifying the strong sense of connection, the safe learning environment, and the diversity valued in the school, two black parents stated:

R1: This is really a great school, safe environment ... They have a lot of opportunities. [School 1] is keeping up with the day, what's going on with technology and everything.

R2: [My daughter] has a course in foreign language, and she's learning Spanish, Korean. She's learning like four different languages and I just think that's awesome.

Attitudes.—Teachers, parents, and students in School 1 generally expressed positive attitudes towards Hispanics and some viewed the Hispanic community as both culturally and socioeconomically diverse.

R3 (AA parent): You know those Hispanic men, they will get out there and work and take care of the family... They coming for a better life. They learn how to hustle and bustle."

R2 (White Parent): I think that we have to divide the conversation into the professional Hispanic community, of which there are lawyers, bankers, and doctors. ... There's also a large, unserved, underclass, which is not part of that same socioeconomic level.

Interactions.—Though they valued the mixed racial/ethnic school composition, racial/ethnic interactions were limited. Students explained that this racial/ethnic separation was partially the result of course structures. Hispanic students in their school were placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) and remedial courses, sometimes located in isolated trailers. According to teachers, these courses often took up much of Hispanic students' schedules, leaving little room for electives and sports where they could interact with other students. Students felt that lack of shared classes prevented them from making Hispanic friends. The racial/ethnic separation in the city's and school's social structure trickled down into participants' informal interactions. At lunch time, according to black male students, Hispanic students "*just, like, disappear.*"

As described by a group of black female students, however, black and Hispanic students may have interacted somewhat more than white and Hispanic students due to their shared socioeconomic and minority backgrounds.

R2: I've never seen them [whites and Hispanics] interact...

R4: I think a lot of the Hispanics get along with the African Americans 'cause they think they can identify with us more than the Caucasians. I'm not sure why. I think cause we're all minorities in a sense, so they feel they're equal to us, more so than with Caucasians.

Accommodations.—Overall, parents and teachers were proud of the school's efforts to meet their growing Hispanic community's educational needs. These included a well-regarded ESL program, a website in Spanish, translators and translated materials available for non-native English speakers and their parents, and remedial courses to support students not meeting grade-level requirements. The school had invested in these resources for several years.

At the same time, the use of Spanish by Hispanic students was frowned upon and raised suspicions that Hispanic students were either speaking badly about other racial/ethnic groups, attempting to be disruptive, or attempting to force other groups to accommodate them. These concerns were summarized best by a group of black female students:

R3: ...They'll be speaking English and if you piss them off, they'll turn around and start speaking Spanish! That makes me feel like they're talking about me.

R4: I think it's disrespectful to speak another language if you do speak English.

Additionally, the resources expended to support Spanish-speakers were seen as taking away from resources to support other students:

R1: I feel that they're being treated like they're handicapped...[teachers] end up doing their work for them....Teachers hurt other students by taking extra time to help [Hispanics]...

Consistent with these beliefs and attitudes, participants in this school also believed that Hispanics in their community should put more effort into learning English, socializing with people outside of their group, and applying themselves academically.

As a context of reception, participants described a high school that was making a concerted effort to meet students' need for education, while struggling to socially integrate them. Partially resembling Berry's notion of a multicultural context, from the top down, the school sought to integrate Hispanic youth into their community by providing culturally-sensitive educational support, which they hoped would facilitate this process. However, the lack of opportunities for daily interaction with non-Hispanics reduced the cultural inclusiveness of the school. Additionally, concerns expressed about Hispanic students' use of Spanish in school highlighted the limits of support for accommodating the maintenance of cultural heritages. Conflicted feelings regarding whether Hispanics were an asset or burden on the community reflected the potential to view acculturation as a zero-sum game where accommodating the maintenance of heritage cultures could be costly.

School 2: Cultural Separation with Passive Accommodation

School 2 was striving to build racial/ethnic cohesion amidst a legacy of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. In fact, when asked to describe their school, teachers and students alike described it with a single word – “*segregated*.” Like school 1, school 2 was set in an urban area where a low cost of living and job opportunities had attracted new residents from other states as well as immigrant populations from both Latin America and Asia.

Community.—Some parents and teachers praised the school for its racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as well as its high academic quality. They lauded the racial/ethnic change, indicating that it promoted “*cultural mixing*” and opportunities to learn and understand different cultures. As noted by one black parent, “*with the influx of Latinos and blacks and Asians...Kids will have to be exposed to other cultures and start learning about other cultures*” (R3).

However, most parents and teachers rarely spoke of the school's diversity in positive terms. They worried that growing racial/ethnic diversity in the school and surrounding neighborhoods was upsetting a historical balance in what had been a predominately white school. They worried that administrative turnover and the hiring of many young, new teachers would reduce the quality of education at the school. They worried about increased absenteeism, students falling asleep in class, inappropriate and abusive language, and disengaged parents. They expressed concern that Hispanic immigrant students would drain public resources and lead to violence, gangs, poorer quality public education, and segregated schools.

Attitudes.—At least one participant in each focus group expressed the desire for stricter immigration control or wished that foreign-born Hispanic students would return to their home countries. For example, a group of white male students indicated that “*the Border Patrol needs to do a better job*” (R3) and should “*put a huge stone wall...like the Great Wall of China*” (R2). Negative attitudes were not limited to Hispanics. “*They [Teachers],*” commented one black Female student (R5), “*think black or Hispanic equals violence.*”

Despite the presence of these negative attitudes, some teachers and students believed that racial/ethnic tensions were not high. Summarizing this sentiment, one teacher (R8) stated:

It’s not really tensions. I mean, everyone gets along, and that’s why we’re saying it’s like a family....Even in your own family...you love each other, but sometimes you get on each other’s nerves....That’s what happens a lot of times with these kids.

Interactions.—Nevertheless, teachers and students indicated that there were few opportunities for positive racial/ethnic interactions at school. As discussed by teachers and students, the segregation embodied by the school was rooted in the school’s historical design. Built in the Jim Crow system, the building had standard facilities for whites and separate, lower quality facilities (e.g., restrooms, drinking fountains, and cafeterias) for blacks. Though the practice of segregating facilities in schools is no longer legal, these separate facilities remained. Teachers and students noted that, over the years, as more Hispanic students attended the school, they began using the separate, “*lower-quality*” facilities as spaces to socialize with other Hispanic students. Reflecting on this practice, a group of white female students remarked:

R2: I don’t even know why, but all the Spanish kids use [the small cafeteria]—

R3: Yeah, the school used to be segregated....that’s why there’s little and big cafeterias...The bathrooms over there were for the black people and then the ones down with the full-length mirror were for the white people. It [segregation] still happens. I think Hispanics all just want to be together. It’s not like the Hispanics or the Latinos can’t come in the big cafeteria.

Practices limiting racial/ethnic interactions in the school and promoting separation were also present in the classroom structures and the structures of extracurricular activities. As described by one black student (R3), “*Honors classes tend to have more white people... Lower class blacks and Hispanics...tend to be in the lower classes.*” Similarly, a white parent (R1) commented that his daughter told him not to put his son in a regular class because “*that’s the lowest level class, and that’s all the blacks.*” Although black and white students indicated that they mixed at sporting events, they also indicated that few Hispanic students engaged in these events, in school leadership or in school clubs. According to one teacher (R6), students were “*scared to push themselves together and to push themselves into getting to know one another.*”

Accommodations.—Despite the on-going segregation, both students and teachers wanted their school to become more integrated and inclusive of Hispanic students. However, they did not know how best to achieve this and there was little accommodation or support for the

maintenance of Hispanic students' heritage cultures and languages. For instance, students noted it was a common practice for teachers to forbid students from speaking Spanish in class.

Several teachers and parents felt that providing Hispanic students and parents with more Spanish-language materials would remove an incentive to learn English. For this reason, according to one teacher (R3), the school had not invested in a translator or in teacher training to help students better understand the experiences of their immigrant students. Instead, teachers and parents strongly emphasized the need for Hispanic students and their families to learn English quickly, be grateful for the work that they have, and legalize their status. As a group of white parents summarized:

R3: When the immigrants were coming in from Europe,...they knew they had to come here and learn the language. That helped them, you know, become American. I think really we bend over backwards to a point where I think it's a problem. I think it's costing the tax payers a lot of money and resources.

R4: If they're gonna be here, there needs to be a way that they can integrate into the community rather than just come here and still be with their own kind.

Accordingly, the school required full English immersion for new students and did not allow students to enroll in ESL classes until they had been at the school for at least two years. The school had also applied for, but not yet received, a grant to offer ESL classes to parents.

Overall, school 2, in contrast to school 1, resembled more of a pressure cooker. With few school- or community-based systems to facilitate cultural exchange and only passive accommodations for language or cultural maintenance, Hispanic youth and their families bore the burden of learning to fit in on their own.

School 3: Cultural Inclusion with Limited Accommodation

School 3 is best characterized as a melting pot, close to boiling over. Described as “*small*” and “*overcrowded*”, School 3 was set in a racially diverse, poor, rural town that most families had lived in for generations. The small town offered ample factory and agricultural jobs but few activities for adolescents to enjoy. Both black and white participants indicated that white farmers controlled town and school governance. Few Hispanics or blacks were considered town or school leaders.

Community.—According to focus group participants, the Hispanic population began moving into and settling in the county in the early 1990s. Prior to this time, the Hispanic population had primarily consisted of migrant laborers who lived seasonally in camps outside of town and interacted little with local residents. All focus groups – teachers, parents, and students -- uniformly associated the increasing presence of Hispanics in the town with rising gang activity, drugs, and violence. They discussed recent cases of shootings in the town and fights in the school. Some of these fights were within the Hispanic community; others were between black and Hispanic students. Because of concerns about gang colors and symbols, the school had adopted clothing restrictions and had a security guard. Furthermore, our focus group of black parents thought that the school needed a metal

detector. At the same time, teachers believed that recent tragedies at the school (the murder of two Hispanic students), were helping to bring the community together. As summarized by one teacher, *“I think that our [student] body as a whole, with the tragedies we have suffered in the last 3 or 4 years, that our kids come together as a whole.”*

Attitudes.—Violence and the increasingly visible presence of Hispanics in the town and high school made some community members feel threatened. As one black female student (R3) explained, *“They [Mexicans] are everywhere, in all the halls at school. If I turn right, they’re there, or right there, or in front of you... They be like trying to take over.”* At the same time, most focus group participants lauded the Hispanic newcomers for their strong family and religious values, standing up for one another, and willingness to do the “dirty” or “hard” jobs that others in town were unwilling to do. For example, a white parent (R2) commented,

My husband actually has two Hispanic employees. They’ve been there a long time working for him. And he thinks highly of them.... And really, a lot of your farmers and people like that, they want people who are going to work hard.... My husband will tell you, that of his employees, they’re probably the hardest working.

Interactions.—Because the school was relatively small with limited resources and no advanced placement classes, classrooms were racially/ethnically integrated. Hispanics rarely attended separate ESL classes, many were US-born and/or spoke primarily English, and they interacted with non-Hispanic students on a daily basis. However, race/ethnic interactions in the classroom were not always positive. Black parents noted that their children were sometimes “treated disrespectfully” and faced discrimination in the process of selecting kids to participate in prestigious activities or to win awards. In their focus group, black female students indicated that some teachers were “prejudiced against black people (R2)”, “You want to learn, but you feel like they ain’t trying to teach you (R3).” They felt that white students received special treatment and that teachers “talked down” to “people of color.” White male students also spoke with frustration about teachers and students who were “judgmental” or “stereotyped” Hispanic and black students. Commenting on this, one white male (R4) said,

“People make fun of what they don’t understand. They don’t understand why they [Hispanics] came. Some people think that because they’re Hispanic, they’re bad people. Some of the Hispanic kids are really cool. You just have to get to know them. The same with black people.”

Accommodations.—When asked about what could be done to improve their school, teachers emphasized the need for more ESL resources for students and trained translators who could reduce the reliance on the use of fellow students as translators. Teachers also felt it was important to provide an opportunity for students to take pride in their ethnic identity and had arranged a Hispanic cultural celebration at the school. As explained by one teacher (R2), *“When you’re involved in their [Hispanic] culture, it makes the classroom environment more smooth. You try to see what’s going on with them to make the classroom environment more enjoyable and you have less discipline problems.”*

Students from every focus group in this school commented that they “*liked*” the Hispanic Heritage celebration, had “*learned something*” from it and, in the case of black students, gained empathy indicating that “*Some of what they went through, we went through (R3).*” White female students thought that there should be more cultural celebrations because “*everyone likes to feel included, to feel like part of a group (R6).*” Students, teachers, and parents also mentioned that they or someone they knew was trying to learn Spanish.

Nevertheless, as in School 1, efforts to seek cultural understanding and make accommodations for the growing Hispanic community had limits. Students were upset by the use of Spanish and by overt displays of ethnic pride. For example, one black female student commented, “*I get mad when...I feel like they’re talking about me [in Spanish]. If you’re going to say something, say it in my language.*” While a white male student commented, “*We show our American pride, but we don’t blow it up in their face.*” Furthermore, white parents complained that Hispanic students required additional attention in school, which took *time out from [their] child* and *affected [their] child’s opportunity to learn (R2)*. Lastly, teachers expressed a desire to see Hispanic students adapt to the existing culture and speak in English more rapidly. They lamented that they “*have to constantly ask students not to speak Spanish!*” (R1).

Overall, School 3 might be best characterized as a boiling pot. The Hispanic population had grown more rapidly than in the urban school districts where schools 1 and 2 were located. This led some participants to characterize the high rate of growth of the Hispanic community in School 3 as a “*takeover*” that threatened the town’s existing cultural fabric. At the same time, the rurality and poverty of the school forced daily racial/ethnic interactions throughout the community and limited the resources available to invest in services (e.g., translation services) to assist newcomers. This led to empathy, efforts to promote cultural understanding and Spanish-language acquisition, and inter-racial/ethnic dating in some cases. In other cases, it led to racial/ethnic tensions, vocal concerns about racial/ethnic discrimination and bias, as well as physical violence.

School 4: Cultural Exclusion without Accommodation

Located in a rural, agricultural community, focus group participants characterized School 4 as being small, poor, and with a largely black student body, which had been historically marginalized. Among the focus group participants with deep, local roots in NC, Hispanic newcomers to the community were seen as a burden that the school did not have the resources to accommodate. In every focus group, people reflected on the difficult financial and social climate that students, parents and teachers faced. In the decades preceding our study, factory closings in the town left behind limited job opportunities, mainly in agriculture. This created competition for the few desirable retail and service jobs in the area.

Community.—School 4 and its surrounding community was largely viewed as marginalized with an increasing minority presence. As a result, according to one white parent (R1), white families were moving: “*It’s gotten decidedly more Latino, and well even, even a little more black. A lot of the [white] people I know have moved away from here... We may have laws against segregation, but that doesn’t mean people don’t segregate*

themselves anyway.” Another black parent (R1) echoed this, “[The whites] send all their kids to [a different public school] or to private schools, so they don’t have to mingle with the black students.”

Parents believed that the resources in the school declined as the percentage of whites in the school declined. Teacher turnover had increased and many of the teachers were less-experienced substitutes who, according to students, would “*leave at the end of the semester*” and, according to parents, “*don’t care*.” Commenting on the high teacher turnover, one teacher (R2) said, “*The number one reason why people [Teachers] leave is really not about the money...It’s about them not having support from the administration, or not having support of their coworkers, or their peers. Then going into the classroom feeling isolated, feeling alone.*”

Black students characterized the school as “*boring*”, “*cheap*”, and without opportunities. White students characterized the school as “*poor, very poor*” and “*underprivileged*.” They characterized the teachers as “*mean*” and “*racist*” telling Hispanic students to “*Talk in English, now*” without appreciating that they are just learning English. They commented that the town lacked tax revenue for the school and the school lacked basic supplies and books. Both groups of students discussed how the school was “*low performing*” and in danger of being shut down.

Attitudes.—There were highly palpable racial/ethnic tensions in the school. Attitudes of white parents were particularly negative toward undocumented Hispanic immigrants who they perceived as taking advantage of public assistance programs and breaking laws without repercussions. Students were aware of the racial tensions that existed among adults, had adopted them, and also perceived the growing Hispanic presence as a threat. A group of white male students commented:

R1: They [Hispanic immigrants] come over here, they’re taking advantage of our social security, food stamps, and stuff, and programs like that because they want to live off the government for free.

R3: The elderly...most of them are racist..., and I’m racist to a point. I’m racist against some black people, because they try to act like something they’re not.

R2: I’m a racist person against Hispanics, because I don’t like them coming over here and trying to steal our country from us.

Black parents and students also expressed concern that Hispanics were “*taking over*.” At the same time, they expressed appreciation for their work in agriculture and empathized with Hispanics who shared their experiences of racism in the community. A black male student (R1) expressed this empathy saying, “*...So it’s like we’re both [blacks and Hispanics] trying to be accepted at the same time.*”

Interactions.—Racial/ethnic tensions in the community manifested as racial/ethnic segregation in the school. Parents, teachers, and students commented on how each racial/ethnic group in the school “*rarely meshed*.” According to black parents, Hispanic students segregated themselves by country of birth but sometimes connected with black students.

R2: Hispanic kids, they don't mingle a lot of them, because Mexicans don't like Guatemalans, Guatemalans don't like Mexican. So, they don't hang with one another....But they hang with all the blacks....They date the black girls....

According to black male students, Hispanics students had adopted stereotypical views of blacks and whites which strained relationships: For example, one black student (R1) commented, "*They [Hispanics] probably be like, that's a black dude. He's not that smart... That's a white boy. They know everything.*"

Accommodations.—In this community with high levels of racial/ethnic conflict and low levels of resources, accommodating Hispanic students was not a priority. The teachers noted that there was only one ESL teacher in the school and Hispanic students had to rely on "peer tutoring" by other Hispanic students when they could not understand the teacher. As in school 2, accommodation was seen as a costly zero-sum game. One white parent (R1) explained,

"...So we start taking a bunch of resources to help that [Hispanic] kid...So while the teacher's over there for the 19th time... trying to explain to Jose that 2+2=4 ... that extra time that she spends away from my child...[My] child there has nothing to do."

In contrast, black parents focused on the need to improve the quality of resources in the school more generally and improve communication with all parents.

In thinking about what the school needed to assist with their growing Hispanic population, teachers emphasized:

R2: If we could get some more finances and hire some assistants to be in the classrooms with the teachers, and some more who did have bilingual skills. That would be good.

R1: Bilingual teachers. If we are going to continue having a high population of Latino students, all of the teachers should be trained in Spanish --all of the teachers. We should at least have conversational Spanish.

More generally, teachers agreed that the school needed to improve communication with students, provide more discipline, and give students more incentive to try harder.

Both black and white students believed that, in addition to more resources, students and teachers needed to challenge racial/ethnic stereotypes and see change as an opportunity for cultural understanding and Spanish language acquisition. For example, one white male student commented (R2), "*...it's [growth of Hispanic population] actually good 'cause ... I've learned a lot more out of different cultures from different races ...I've learned a little Spanish....* Sharing the same sentiment, a black female student (R2) said, "*To me, it's a positive thing...It's good, like educated, to learn another culture, another language, especially by a different country.*"

Though there were signs of the potential for change, the overall incorporation strategy adopted by School 4 was one of exclusion. Blacks, whites, and Hispanics attended the same

school and shared the same classrooms but, unlike in school 3, rarely interacted. While there appeared to be a normative view that Hispanics were hardworking, participants expressed beliefs that Hispanics were unwelcome and contributing to the town's economic decline. Feeling impoverished and burdened by a history of exclusion and racism, participants' accounts point to a school that lacked the resources and collective will to accommodate the growing Hispanic segment of the town's population.

DISCUSSION

As suggested by Berry's framework (2003), our research revealed substantial variability across schools in their degree of cultural inclusion and accommodation of cultural heritages. However, none of our schools combined high inclusion with low accommodation or low inclusion with high accommodation. The two urban schools tended to provide more accommodations for Hispanic students than the rural schools. Yet they had distinct approaches to cultural inclusion/exclusion. Among the urban schools, School 1 was viewed as inclusive, whereas School 2 was viewed by parents, teachers, and students as "segregated." Students of different racial/ethnic groups attended the same school but had limited contact with one another. Hispanic newcomers' customs and traditions were accommodated but not integrated into the school or broader community. Similarly, among the rural schools, School 3 could be characterized as inclusive though the high degree of racial/ethnic interactions sometimes led to physical conflicts. On the other hand, School 4 had an entrenched, historical pattern of racial/ethnic separation that was extended to include Hispanic newcomers. Moreover, the broader community perceived Hispanic newcomers as a threat to their way of life.

Consistent with Alba (2005), we also identified a variety of institutional practices, student behaviors, and teacher behaviors across the schools that brightened rather than blurred racial/ethnic boundaries, reduced Hispanic newcomers influence in schools, and potentially inhibited their assimilation. In School 1, Hispanic students in ESL classes were physically located in trailers set apart from the rest of the school. In School 2, separated restrooms and cafeterias built during the Jim Crow era had become a safe haven for Hispanics. In School 3, the use of Spanish and overt displays of ethnic pride had become sources of resentment and suspicion among students, and sometimes, teachers. In School 4, English-only classroom requirements and a lack of translation services prevented communication between Spanish-speaking parents and students and English-speaking teachers, parents, and students. Because of these brightened boundaries, Hispanic newcomers had limited opportunities to actively participate in the civic life of the school and community. Both racial/ethnic isolation and defensive mainstream hostility inhibited cross-cultural learning between Hispanic newcomers and long-time non-Hispanic black and white residents.

Additionally, we found that not all members of each school or community reacted to Hispanic newcomers in the same way. Comparing racial/ethnic group responses to Hispanic newcomers across schools, we found that blacks expressed political solidarity with Hispanics while also perceiving an economic threat from Hispanics. They repeatedly commented on their shared minority status and Hispanics' willingness to engage in the agricultural jobs that blacks had left behind. At the same time, they worried about school

resources being re-directed towards Hispanic students and whites privileging Hispanics in service sector jobs. The attitudes of whites differed by socioeconomic status and location, which were intertwined. Higher SES whites in our urban areas expressed little sense of economic threat from Hispanic newcomers, but also limited social interaction with Hispanics in their schools or communities. They talked about Hispanics using stereotypical and sometimes unintentionally demeaning tropes. Lower SES whites in rural areas, by contrast, expressed a strong sense of both cultural and economic threat. It was only some of the younger generation of students (rather than parents or teachers) that seemed to value the potential for cultural exchanges and interactions that could enrich their lives.

Differences in schools' modes of incorporation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) partially reflected the availability of resources in the schools and the intersection of rural location, poverty, and race/ethnicity. Because funding for public schools is tied to local property taxes, the urban schools had more resources available to accommodate Hispanic newcomers than the rural schools. They had higher percentages of white students than the rural schools, lower teacher turnover, lower percentages of students receiving free/reduced price lunches, and lower percentages of Hispanic students. In the rural schools where the influx of foreign-born Hispanic students was greater, poverty higher, and patterns of racial/ethnic segregation more entrenched, there was both less capacity and less commitment to accommodating heritage cultures or facilitating cross-cultural exchanges.

Though ten years have passed since these data were collected, the patterns identified in these schools and their surrounding communities have endured, even as the Hispanic population in these school and communities has become predominately US-born. The youth of the schools in each of our sites are now the adults responsible for the civic lives of their communities. Newspaper and public opinion reports suggest a stronger commitment to accommodating immigrants and racial/ethnic minorities in urban areas of North Carolina and continued fears about the economic and social impact of Hispanic newcomers in more rural areas (Gergen and Martin 2015; PRRI 2013; Watson and Riffe 2013). The rural areas of North Carolina, including those in this study, voted overwhelmingly in favor of Donald Trump and the immigration policies he espoused during his presidential campaign (Politico 2016). In contrast, to facilitate the "successful integration" of immigrants more urban areas in NC have adopted "welcoming city" initiatives and/or terminated their 287(g) programs.

Overall, this study demonstrates that modes of incorporation vary substantially across schools even within a single state. The modes of incorporation within each school reflect differences in the availability of resources across schools, the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition of each school, and the history of racial/ethnic relations in each school and its surrounding community. However, because rural location, race/ethnic, and social class across our schools are highly intertwined, we are not able to disentangle the influence of each on modes of incorporation within schools. To better understand the influence of these factors, future research should encompass many more schools with greater variation in rural-urban location, racial/ethnic composition, and socioeconomic composition. Our research is also limited to four schools at a single point in time. We do not have longitudinal data from the non-Hispanic students, parents, and teachers in the school to evaluate whether these differences in modes of incorporation are maintained or change over

time or to evaluate their effects on the socio-cultural assimilation of Hispanic youth in the South. Future research should also aim to collect longitudinal data on the attitudes, behaviors, and practices in schools and the socio-cultural assimilation of Hispanic youth. The adaptation of immigrants and their children does not take place in a vacuum. As we develop federal, state, and local policies and practices, we must remember that our choices will not only shape the futures of immigrants and their children but also the future of our entire community.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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Figure 1.
Cultural Inclusion and Accommodation within NC Schools.

Table 1.

School Characteristics and Focus Group Demographics, by School

	Total		School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4				
Panel A. 2007-08 School Characteristics ^a										
School Size	--	--	N=1500	N=2000	N=500	N=600				
Hispanic Growth 2000-15	--	--	Low	Medium	High	High				
% Hispanic	--	--	10%	15%	20%	25%				
% White	--	--	45%	55%	50%	25%				
% Reduced Lunch	--	--	40%	25%	70%	60%				
Student/teacher ratio	--	--	18:1	15:1	16:1	22:1				
Teacher Turnover	--	--	10%	15%	20%	40%				
Graduation Rate: All	--	--	70%	80%	65%	60%				
Graduation Rate: Hispanics	--	--	50%	70%	55%	35%				
Graduation Rate: LEP	--	--	35%	75%	20%	25%				
Panel B. Focus Group Demographics, by School, Frequency (%) ^b										
	N	(%/M)	N	(M/%)	N	(M/%)	N	(M/%)	N	(M/%)
Sample N	139	100%	31	100%	40	100%	36	100%	32	100%
Male	46	33%	11	35%	14	35%	11	31%	10	31%
Mean Student Age	--	16	--	15	--	15	--	16	--	16
Mean Adult Age	--	40	--	48	--	47	--	41	--	41
Born in NC ^{**}	89	64%	17	55%	16	40%	31	86%	25	78%
Race*										
White	64	47%	15	48%	25	64%	13	38%	11	35%
Black	62	46%	14	45%	14	36%	16	47%	18	58%
Other	5	4%	--	--	--	--	3	9%	2	6%
Parent College Grad	14	52%	4	50%	4	57%	3	43%	3	60%
Employed	63	45%	15	48%	20	50%	13	36%	15	47%

^{**}
p<0.05 fisher's exact test. Note(s): M=Mean;

^aData in Panel A are from the NC Department of Instruction 2007-2008. To protect participating schools and students from deductive disclosure, data in Panel A have been rounded.

^bNine schools were randomly selected for participation in the study based on the proportion of Hispanics enrolled in 9th grade. From these nine schools, two rural (school 1 and 2) and two urban schools (school 3 and 4) were randomly selected to participate in the focus groups arm of the study.