

# Perceptions of Latino High School Students on Parental and High School Support for Higher Education Preparation

Megan E. Guerra

Dr. Lyn Howell, Dr. Angela Hilton-Prillhart, & Dr. Bert Allen

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## Introduction

Although the Latino population in the United States is growing, the representation of Latinos in higher education is static. Also, the representation of Latino students in colleges is unequally distributed throughout the states. Of the Latinos who continue onto college or higher education, 70% attend colleges or universities in California, Florida, New York and Texas as well as Puerto Rico (Santiago 2008). A research team at Milligan College sought to answer why Latinos are underrepresented in higher education. The researchers gathered responses from high school Latino students in two locations: Northeast Tennessee and south Texas. Latinos represent 93% of the 175,027 people living in south Texas, whereas Latinos represent only 1.5% of the population in NE Tennessee (National Center for Educational Statistics 2012). This study compares the impact of Latinos being the minority or majority in relation to students' perceived support for higher education preparation. Because of the vast difference in the Latino populations, it was expected that the students from NE Tennessee would have a weaker sense of perceived support for higher education due to being a minority within the population and possibly less familial support. Those in south Texas were expected to have a stronger perception of positive support due to being a part of the majority of the population as well as seeing education as a way out of their city's poor economic situation.

## Method and Participants

Students from both areas were given a 73-question survey which contained multiple-choice and short answer questions; this study focused on 18 questions from the larger survey. There was a total of 140 high school seniors surveyed from one city high school in south Texas, and a combined total of 30 high school seniors from three northeast Tennessee schools. The study consisted of 170 participants, 74 of whom were male, 94 female, and 2 of unspecified gender. The ages ranged from 16 to 18 years old. The study examined the students' view of educational support and their stated educational plans in order to measure perceived support for higher education preparation.



Figure 1.

The project's researchers look over the data. Those pictured from left to right: Megan Guerra, Dani De Sousa Arocha, and C. Anneke Snyder.

## Results

To measure the students' perceived support for higher education, their response to "Will you go to college?" was compared to several factors. Below, are a few graphs which illustrate the significant correlations between their plans to attend college and the support to do so.

Figure 2.

There is a statistically significant positive relationship between northeast Tennessee Latino students planning to pursue higher education and the perception of having parental support to continue into higher education,  $r(28) = .39, p < .05$ .

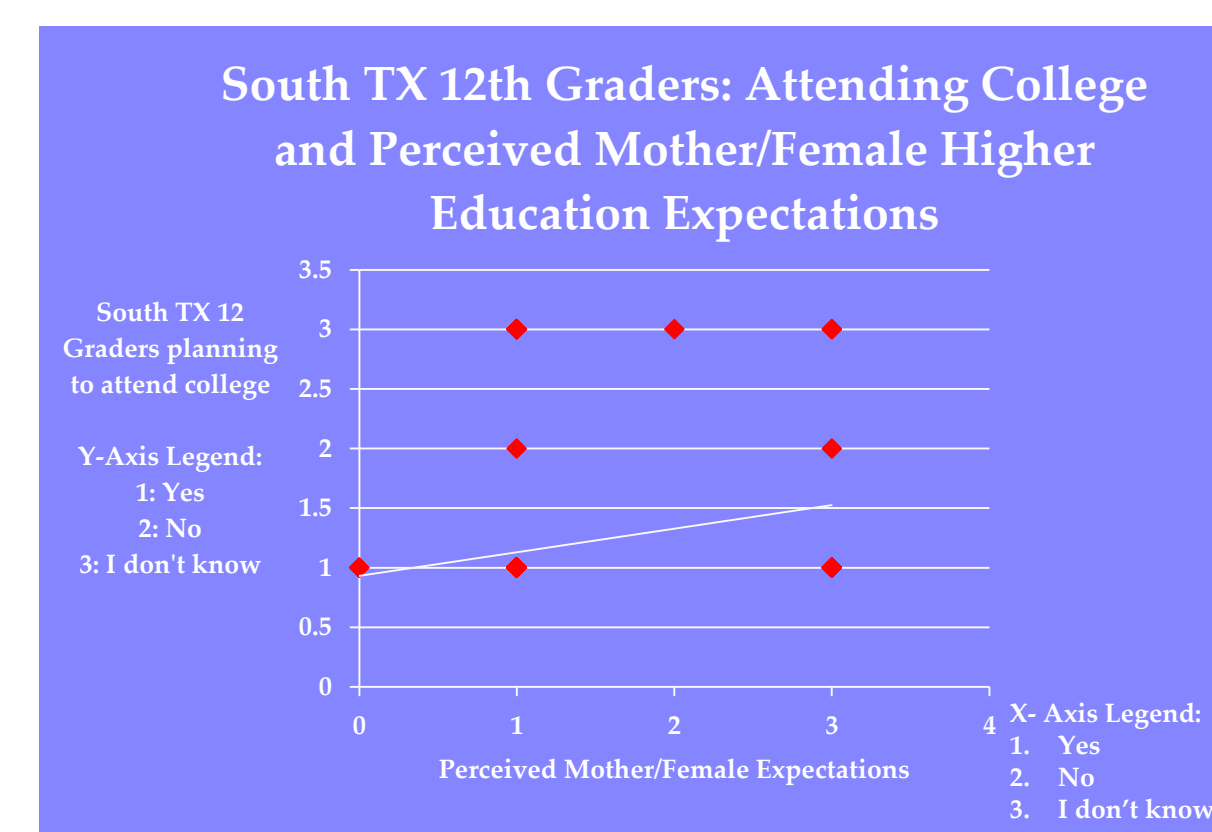
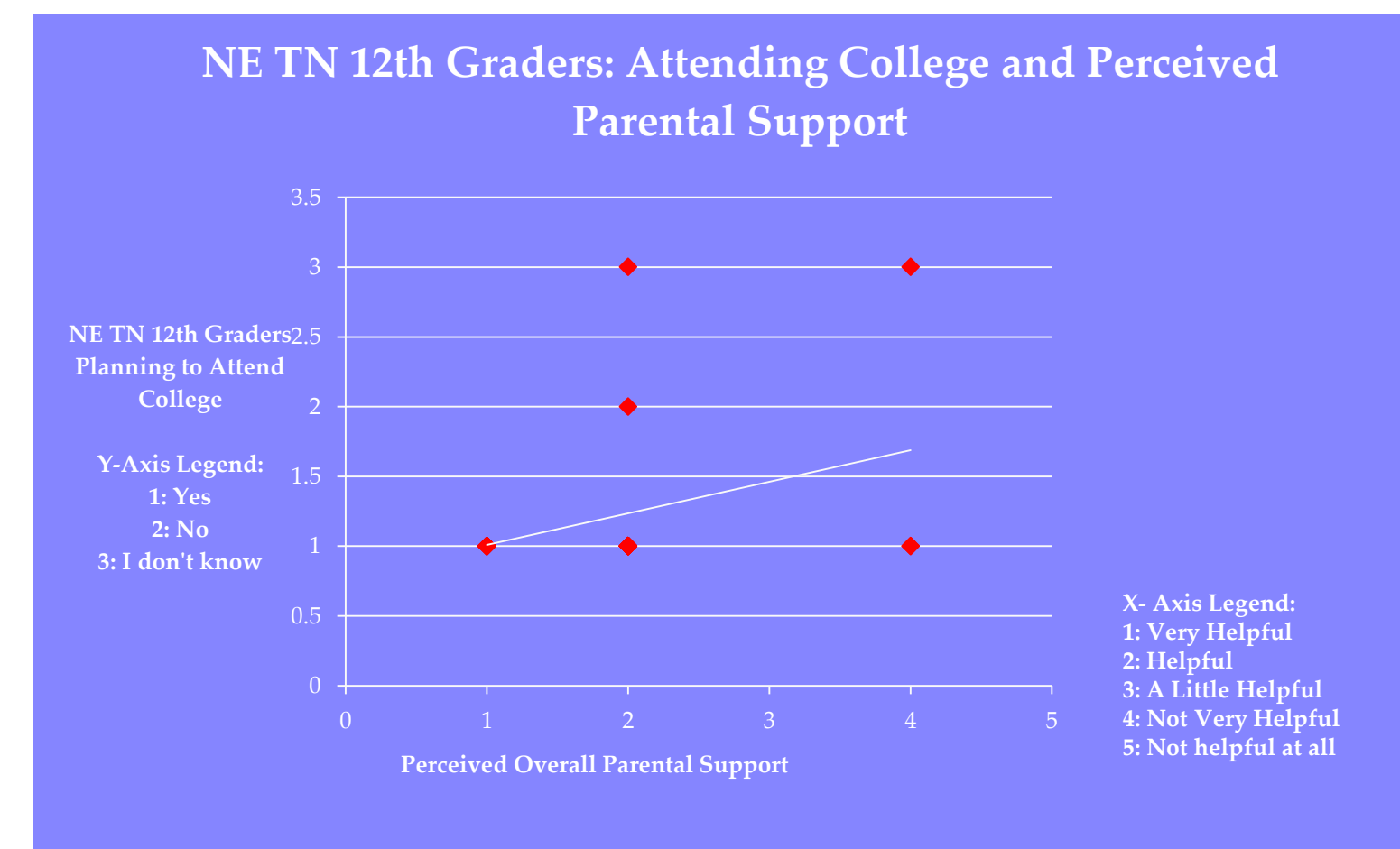


Figure 3.

A statistically significant positive relationship was found between south Texas Latino students planning to pursue higher education and the perception of the expectations of mother or female figures in the home,  $r(138) = .21, p < .05$  (Fig. 3). NE Tennessee students also had a significant positive correlation  $r(28) = .56, p < .05$  between these variables (Fig. 4).

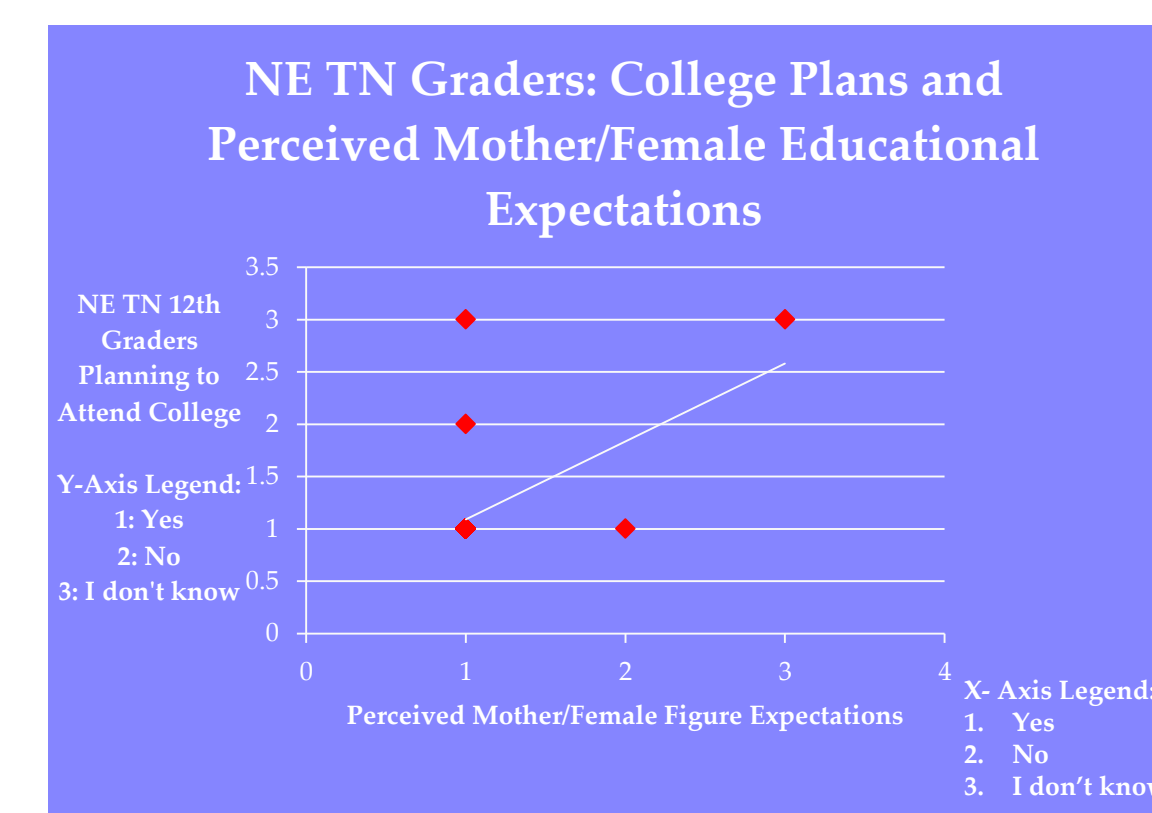
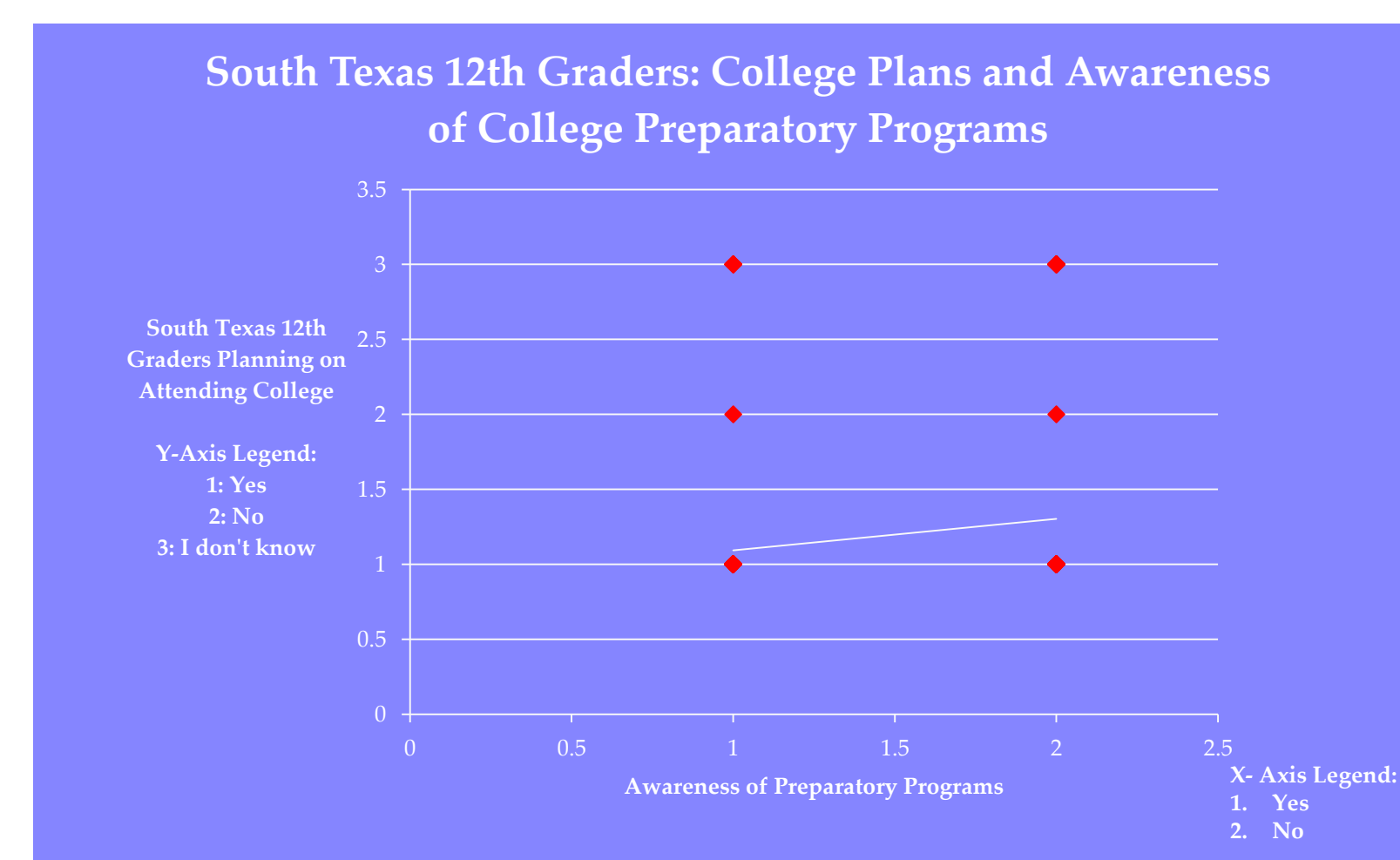


Figure 4.

Figure 5.

The South Texas 12<sup>th</sup> Graders had a statistically significant positive relationship between planning to pursue higher education and being aware of college preparatory programs,  $r(138) = .18, p < .05$ .



## Acknowledgments

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## Conclusions

In south Texas, the Latino population is the majority whereas it is the minority in NE Tennessee. After comparing the high school seniors' responses from both areas, positive statistical significant correlations were found concerning their perceived support for higher education and their plans to attend college. In NE TN, the Latino students reported their parents were overall very helpful to their pursuit of higher education (Fig. 2) whereas the south TX students reported less overall parental support. However, both groups had a statistically significant positive relationship between the expectations of the mother or female figure in their home and planning to attend college (Fig. 3). In fact, based off a step-wise regression the mother's or female figure's expectations was one of the strongest correlations for the south Texas students planning to attend college along with college preparatory programs. They were more aware of college preparatory programs which they were more likely to be engaged in whereas the NE TN students were not as aware of college preparatory programs. The hypothesis was correct in predicting a difference in support between the two areas because the south TX students had more perceived scholastic support with some parental expectations which correlated with their plans to attend college, whereas the NE TN students reported significantly more parental support and expectations but no perceived scholastic support.

Within this study, it appears the population size of Latinos in a given location does have an impact on perceived academic support for higher education. Educational systems should take note since Latinos as a minority population in specific regions may not receive as much support and yet the Latino population is growing. It is possible to increase high school support for Latino students. Indeed for future research, a longitudinal study would be beneficial in displaying how Latino students pursue their plans. As Latinos grow in population in the United states, it is important to strive to give them equal opportunities for a better future over all regions no matter their population size. Schools could improve communication for the students and parents or guardians of Latino students. If the student is still learning English, the school could hire a translator. Colleges and Universities could create scholarships to support Latino students or offer programs to help them get the most out of their college experience and encourage them to enter into higher education.

## Literature

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