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View of Self and Its Effects on Higher Educational Goals
in Mexican-American Youth

By

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

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Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University – University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

The Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, with 276,000 people identifying as Hispanics in Minnesota (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). As the population continues to grow in number, more Latino students will continue to fill classrooms across the state. However, in 2012, only 53% of Hispanic students in Minnesota graduated high school, in comparison to 84% of white students (Race, 2012).

The Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, with 276,000 people identifying as Latino in Minnesota (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). As the population continues to grow in number, more Latino students will continue to fill classrooms across the state. However, in 2012, only 53% of Hispanic students in Minnesota graduated high school, in comparison to 84% of white students (Race, 2012).

Given the demographic changes across the country, social workers, as well as educators, should be working hard to enhance the success of youth of color, including graduating high school. Studies show that withdrawing from high school has negative consequences (Amos, 2009). Dropouts are twice as likely to be unemployed, they perform at a lower cognitive level, and present a greater risk for incarceration in the future (Governing, 2012).

Education has the power to change cycles of injustice, as well as prevent negative outcomes for dropout students. However, the large disparity in graduation rates between ethnic groups and white students indicates that systemic injustice is already present. While helping professionals should work to examine the causes of withdrawal among Hispanic youth, research regarding motivational factors for graduation is also vital. This study examines how an individual's view of themselves affects their goals for further academic achievement using secondary data analysis from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. Understanding predictors of academic success among Latino youth can lead to different models of education,

creation of unique programs, additional support for Latino students, as well as educated leaders for the future of the United States.

Literature Review

As of 2014, the estimated number of Latinos in the United States was 55 million, the largest minority group in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Of those 55 million, approximately 17.9 million are school-aged youth aged 18 years and under (Patten, 2016). The national graduation rate for Latino youth is 73%, not too far from the overall average of 80%; however, in Minnesota, the graduation rate for Latinos is 53% (Governing, 2012). Given the discrepancy in graduation rates nationally and state-wide for Latino youth, professionals must examine the motivations of Latino students who have succeeded academically and use that information to influence practice.

Immigrant youth have several factors working against them. Research shows that immigrant youth often lack social support, experience more adverse events, and lack access to educational assistance, all of which negatively impact a student's likelihood to succeed academically (Aretakis, Ceballo, Suarez, & Camacho, 2015; Carolan-Silva, & Reyes, 2013; Degarmo & Martinez, 2006; Murray, 2009). However, many Latino immigrant youths are resilient, motivated students who have an intrinsic desire to grow, learn, and succeed for themselves and for their families (Rivas-Drake, 2008).

Given the fact that Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in the United States, professionals should take an interest in their educational development. Students with higher education levels can benefit the country and economy as a whole. Educated individuals typically have lower poverty rates; therefore, they invest more money in the government through taxes and often do not utilize government assistance, hence generating more money for the country. Further research shows that individuals with higher education levels tend to be more civic minded; they volunteer more often, vote more often, and donate to organizations and individuals

more often than counterparts without a college degree (Baum & Payea, 2005). Receiving further education will not only benefit Latino individuals, it will serve the nation in a larger context. Hence, social workers, educators, and civilians should be aware of barriers, as well as motivations for success in order to best support students whom identify as Latino.

Social Support

Lack of social support is a commonly cited issue for Latino students. Studies of lifespan development identify three main sources of support for adolescents: family, formal institutions, and informal support from peers and other adults (Mullis, Hill, & Readdick, 1999; Degarmo & Martinez, 2006). Unfortunately, there are commonly gaps or obstacles in such social supports for Latino students that make it difficult for youth to feel well supported within the school system itself. This makes it increasingly difficult for Latino students to excel.

Family Support. Family support plays a large role in a student's academic success. Family cohesion is a strong value in Latino culture, often referred to as *familismo* (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006). The trait refers to the expectation that family comes first (2006) and that cultural members will put the good of the family above individual interests (Carolan-Silva, & Reyes, 2013). A study by Aretakis et al. (2015) revealed that students with high regard for *familismo* had a positive relation with educational values and school effort. Given this information, it would seem as though the concept of *familismo* would provide ample social support for students; however, the high levels of obligation and high expectations from parents may encourage students to drop-out in order to support the family system (Aretakis, Ceballo, Suarez & Camacho, 2015; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006).

In Latino culture, family is held in high regard. The community rallies around one another when there is illness, financial stress, or any other myriad of events. In the event that a

family is struggling financially, an adolescent child may feel it is his or her duty to help support the family. This, in turn, can lead to high school students choosing to work full-time over continuing their education. Similarly, a child may feel the obligation to care for younger siblings in the event that parents cannot pay for childcare. This may result in a child temporarily leaving the educational system or permanently leaving high school altogether. However, it's important to note that Latino families hold education in high regard; the majority of Latino individuals view education as a way to get ahead in life (Lopez, 2009).

Academic support from family members is a key factor in student academic success. In fact, it is one of the greatest factors associated with academic success (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Latino children whose parents regularly attended school events and educational activities also had a much higher rate of academic success (2006). However, some Latino parents face several barriers that make it difficult to actively participate in school activities. Immigrant parents may have a language barrier, lack transportation, have chaotic work schedules, feel as though the schools do not listen to their needs, and lack an understanding of American school culture (Henry, Plunkett, & Sands, 2011; Ramirez, 2003; Ceballo, Maurizi, Suarez, & Aretakis, 2014).

Formal Institutions. Formal institutions, such as the school itself, often struggle with supporting their Latino students. This can make high academic achievement difficult because schools can lack interpretation or translation services, as well as an understanding of cultural or environmental differences in Latino students as compared to white students, or have minimal training on teaching English Language Learners (Ramirez, 2003). All of these factors can lead to a student feeling disconnected from their school.

When immigrant youth feel a strong sense of belonging and have academic support from teachers, they are more likely to succeed academically. According to Murray (2009), a positive student-teacher relationship increases student engagement, raises grades in language arts and math, as well as overall math achievement. In another study, students with a high level of school attachment, meaning the feeling of connectedness and belonging at school, served as a buffer to the negative effects of experiencing violence (Fite, Rubens, & Cooley). Given enough support, positive relationships in the school setting can help students overcome difficult contextual factors that may lead to academic hardships.

Peer support. During high school years, friends and socialization are an important part of growth and development for adolescents. Friends frequently influence an individual's choices, for good or bad, and can sometimes be a bigger influential factor than family members (Scholastic, 2008). This holds true for Latino students, too. In a study that interviewed eight Latino graduates, one of the greatest factors influencing college attendance was peer support (Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013). Students were more likely to graduate high school and attend college when their peers were doing so. Positive friendships can affect an individual's academic goals.

Peer support, or lack of peer support, can change the trajectory of success for Latino youth. In the event that a student's parents do not speak English, peers are the next in line to provide academic support (Fuigni; Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006). Collaboration and teamwork amongst Latino peers is common. Nevertheless, there are some students who do not feel supported by their peers. In the event that youth feel excluded by their school peers, it is likely their academic performance will suffer. A study by Fite, Rubens, & Cooley further supported the claim that social rejection of an individual student is strongly related to poor

academic performance. All in all, the presence, or absence, of peer relationships can affect the path of a Latino student through high school and beyond.

Adverse Experiences

Disproportionately more Latino families and individuals are living in poverty in comparison to the rest of the United States population. Approximately 26.6% of Latinos were characterized as poor, whereas only 9.9% of non-Hispanic whites reported living in poverty (University of Michigan, 2016). In fact, Latino children make up the majority of children living in poverty, at 6.1 million, more than any other racial or ethnic minority (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Children of immigrant parents have a 40.7% chance of growing up in poverty; Latino children in a female-headed household have a 57.3% of growing up in poverty (2011). These statistics demand attention. Living in impoverished areas leads to an increase of exposure to adverse childhood experiences such as witnessing or being a victim of violence, substance use, and a lack of educational resources (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Fite, Rubens & Cooley; Solberg, Carlstrom, Howard, & Jones, 2007).

The research surrounding adverse childhood experiences is fairly new, with the first study beginning in 1998. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are when there is “a strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body’s stress response systems in the absence of the buffering protection of a supportive, adult relationship.” (Shonkoff, et al., 2011). These stressors can present themselves in a variety of ways: abuse, neglect, family members with mental illness, presence of addiction at home, witnessing violence, and a myriad of other experiences. (Feletti, et al., 1998), and urban residents – including Latinos - seem have a greater risk of exposure to ACEs than suburban, typically white, residents.

Adverse childhood experiences are more common than people would think. In the original ACE study, research found that approximately 64% of participants had experienced at least once ACE. This was surprising to researchers as most of the original participants were white, upper-middle class respondents (Jablow, 2014). In a follow-up study, researchers adapted the original questionnaire with urban indicators. These included experiencing racism, witnessing violence, living in an unsafe neighborhood, living in foster care, and experiencing bullying (2014). After distributing the adapted ACE questionnaire, data indicated that nearly 81% of participants had experienced at least one ACE in their lifetime.

Education engagement and academic success are impacted by adverse childhood experiences. As the number of ACEs increases, so do the risks for further complications. Common risks associated with ACEs are health problems, mental distress, substance use, unemployment, and lower educational attainment (Center for Disease Control, 2000). If a student is exposed to a traumatic event, it disrupts their neurocognitive development. This disruption can impair their cognition, affect regulation, fine motor skills, and brainstem regulation (Perry, 2008). These factors can lead to low academic engagement and feeling disconnected with the school, which is a commonly cited reason for students to drop out of school (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013). Latino students are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts, and therefore, are more likely to be victims of an ACE. Professionals should work to counteract trauma experienced by an adverse childhood event in order to keep Latino students engaged in school.

Educational Assistance

Often times, Latino families struggle to navigate their involvement in the school system. This leads to a gap in receiving educational assistance. Immigrant families go through a process

of acculturation, or increasing knowledge about the present culture in which they reside (Mendez & Westerberg, 2012). Less acculturated parents reported high academic expectations for their children, yet less involvement in the school system (Moreno & Lopez, 1999). In fact, one study found that “they did not expect to be involved with the school directly.” (2012). This can be due to the high respect and regard most Latino adults have for the educational system. Many Latino parents may feel that getting involved in their child’s education shows lack of respect for teachers or the school system. Therefore, families are often surprised that parental involvement in school is encouraged.

Other barriers keep Latino parents away from school involvement, as well. Fear of discrimination and concerns about legal status can deter parents from involvement in the school system (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010; Mendez & Westerberg, 2012). Being from a different country and culture, immigrant families may lack the confidence to assert themselves in the school system or the knowledge to know that they can advocate on behalf of their children. Parents have also reported having poor relationships with the school because of feeling unheard or pushed away when sharing concerns or questions (Moreno & Lopez, 1999; Murray, 2009; Mendez & Westerberg, 2012). This can cause parents to feel unwanted and embarrassed to reach out to the school again.

If schools are not listening to the parents of Latino students, it becomes increasingly difficult for parents to access resources or know areas of difficulty for their child. However, a growing number of schools are recognizing the need for multicultural staff, interpreters, and culturally sensitive academia (Santiago, Fuller, & Lennon, 2016). When parents feel welcomed and heard by school staff and administration they are more likely to invest in the school itself. Parental involvement in the school system allows parents to be aware of problems and/or ways to

help their child, have positive experiences with their child, and learn more about their child's motivation within the school setting (2016). Therefore, it is vital for school systems to cooperate and communicate with Latino parents in order to ensure the best academic experience for the child.

Resiliency Factors

Although there are several barriers for Latino youth, they are exceptionally resilient students. Resilience is conceptualized by adapting well and overcoming obstacles in the face of adversity; it is the ability to bounce back from exceptionally difficult experiences (Walsh, 2006). Immigrant families by nature are resilient as they have had to rebuild a life in a new culture. Most Hispanic immigrant families have also faced hardship, violence, financial insecurity, amongst other factors, that caused them to migrate in the first place (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). This inner strength provides support for Latino students to be flexible learners in the face of adversity.

Interestingly enough, resiliency and educational success have a symbiotic relationship. Resiliency is the ability to overcome misfortune or negative change. It is frequently thought of as the ability to bounce back after distressing events. It makes sense that students who are resilient will have higher academic success. In the case that there are stressful situations in the child's life, the resilient student will be able to forge ahead in his/her studies more so than the non-resilient counterpart. Literature also states that resilient individuals often excel and succeed because of their difficult circumstances, not in spite of them. In some cases, unfortunate events can serve as a motivational factor to succeed (Walsh, 2006).

Educational success can also build upon an individual's resiliency. Academic success is often an indicator of high brain functioning. Healthy cognitive functioning can support children

in their processing of information, as well as how they respond to hardships presented to them over time (Flores, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2005). This may help individual's see various perspectives to a stress-inducing situation and contribute to his/her ability to move forward. Both characteristics play an important role of growth and development in an individual.

Classroom Environment

A large predictor of academic success lies within the four walls of the classroom. Tactics, methods, and teaching styles all impact the educational attainment of the students. School aged children often need motivation to succeed academically. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a part in overall student performance. Parental surveillance, parental reaction to grades, curiosity, the desire to discover and learn, as well as several other factors play a role in a child's desire to succeed. Self-determination theory has been heavily studied by researchers in order to provide more context to motivations how they affect outcomes, both personally and educationally. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators have been proven to positively affect the academic engagement of students. However, extrinsic motivators are less effective than intrinsic motivators.

Self-determination Theory. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a concept that revolves around the idea of intention. It primarily looks at the factors that affect quality of motivation in learning environments (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). SDT not only examines intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, but also the contexts in which such motivations are supported. Two common contexts have emerged from research: autonomous-supported and controlled. Controlled contexts are environments which tend to push, or force, learning or behavior on an individual. It's also defined as the pressure to "think, act, or feel in particular ways" (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Often times, extrinsic motivators are used in controlled

contexts in a school environment; these can be rewards systems, deadlines, or grades (Ginsbur & Bronstein, 1993). While these extrinsic motivators may provide a framework for students, they don't always cultivate the best learning environment. Students who feel obligated to complete assignments or participate in educational activities often do not appreciate the learning process or take away long-lasting lessons from the learning (Lennon & Watson). There is a need to link the importance of education to the personal values and goals of each individual student.

Autonomous contexts, on the other hand, give students a choice. When students are given a choice, they tend to be more invested in their learning. For example, classrooms that used more autonomous-supported contexts had students that showed higher levels of enjoyment of class work, positive emotions, conceptual learning, and memory recall (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). In contrast, classrooms that utilized extrinsic motivation in a controlled context had reports of lower achievement and lower conceptual learning (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Students feel a higher sense of responsibility in their learning and higher levels of enjoyment when they are learning within autonomous contexts. In fact, the family environment can greatly impact a student's desire to learn, and therefore, their academic achievement. Previous research notes that parental support of a child's autonomy encourages more participation in the classroom, higher levels of competence, and leads to overall academic achievement (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993). Overall, autonomous-supported contexts place more responsibility on the learner; therefore, engaging the student in more holistic realms of educational attainment.

Motivators. According to Self-Determination Theory, autonomous environments actually encourage the growth of intrinsic motivators in individuals (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). When a student is intrinsically motivated they partake in the learning process for

enjoyment, discovery, and personal interest (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Building intrinsic learning skills help a student beyond the classroom, as well. Intrinsic motivation encourages individuals to be creative, critical thinkers, and problem-solvers (Ayub, 2010). Also, intrinsic motivation has been linked to several interpersonal benefits and social skills. Individuals who possess higher levels of intrinsic motivation tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction, self-actualization, and a sense of ‘mattering’ (Lemon & Watson; Vensteenkist, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Mattering can be extremely important for students at-risk for dropping out of high school; peer relationships, teacher relationships, and familial relationships all influence a student’s perception of mattering. Students that report that they are important and matter to others tend to have less anxiety and depression, healthier ethnic identities, increased academic motivation, and overall better wellness (Lemon & Watson). A sense of mattering is vital for a student’s overall view of self.

Although previous research has alluded to the fact that positive intrinsic motivation leads to an improved view of self, there is little research directly linking how view of self affects academic success. The present study looks at the correlation between the student’s thoughts about oneself and the individual’s overall goals for higher education. Given previous research, this researcher makes the following hypotheses:

1. Students with higher views of self and their abilities will have higher goals for future academic achievement than that of their counterparts.
2. Students with higher views of self and their abilities will have a higher correlation between their *perceived goals* and the *actuality of achieving their goals*.

Methods

This secondary-data analysis analyzed data previously gathered by the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), spanning from 1991-2006. It gathered information from children of immigrant families in the metropolitan areas of Miami and Ft. Lauderdale of Florida, as well as San Diego California. CILS was a three-part longitudinal study that was designed to study the adaptation process of the second-generation immigrant. The first survey was conducted in 1992 with 5,262 participants; this served as a baseline for the study and collected mainly demographic information. The second tier of the survey was conducted in 1997 and collected data about the students' growth and adaptation, specifically looking at self-esteem, self-identity, and academic attainment. Four-thousand, two hundred and eighty-eight of the original sample completed the second survey. The final tier, or the third survey, was conducted over the span of two years, from 2001-2003. Information collected included educational attainment, ethnic identity, incarceration, attitudes towards American society, and plans for the future. Of the original group, 68.9% of respondents completed the third tier of the survey.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will be examining data from Mexican respondents from all three tiers of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. The current study aims to gather information regarding students' self-esteem and how it impacts academic aspirations, as well as completed education levels. The previously stated hypotheses were made:

1. Students with higher views of self will have higher *academic aspirations* for the future than that of students with lower views of self.
2. Students with higher views of self will have higher *completed education levels* than that of students with lower view of self.

Given the hypotheses, the researcher isolated three variables from the data set: self-esteem, academic aspirations, and completed education level. Demographic variables were also restricted for the purpose of the study, as the researcher solely wanted to examine responses by students who self-identified as Mexican.

To begin the data analysis, the researcher downloaded the Code Book and data set to access information of the Children of Longitudinal Study via SPSS. As previously mentioned, all respondents, except those who identified as Mexican, were excluded from the data set. This left the researcher with a sample size of 755 participants. Once the data set was isolated, the researcher gathered general information to further describe the sample. Descriptive statistics were run on the data set including gender, age, and current grade level. After demographic information was collected, specific questions that correlated with students' self-esteem, academic aspirations, and completed education level were identified.

In the second tier of the CILS, there is a specific scale that correlates to self-esteem. Variable 301 to 313 are based on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. There was no cumulative scoring in the CILS codebook; therefore, the researcher had to recode individual questions to fit the proper coding of Rosenberg's original scale. Once individual recoding was completed, cumulative scores had to be calculated. The researcher utilized Excel to find the sum of respondents' scores from Variable 301 to 313. The total scores ranged from 0 to 39. Per Rosenberg's scaling, scores from 1 through 39 were valid. Descriptive statistics were run and then recoded. Scores ranging from 1 through 25 were given a value of 1, which is qualified as low self-esteem. Responses ranging from 26 to 39 were given a value of 2, which is qualified as high self-esteem. Descriptive statistics were then run based on the recoded self-esteem levels, which can be found in the Findings section.

Next, the variable regarding academic aspiration was identified. One question was identified, Question 60: *What is the highest level of education you'd like to achieve?* Descriptive statistics were run on Variable 60, and then recoded for the purpose of running chi-square associations between academic aspiration and self-esteem. Options of “less than high school” and “finish high school” were recoded as value 1, which is categorized as *high school or less*. “Finish some college”, “finish college”, and “finish a graduate degree” were recoded as value 2, which is categorized as *some college or more*. Descriptive statistics were then run on the recoded variables, which can be found in the Findings section.

A chi-square was then run between the two recoded variables, *self-esteem* and *academic aspirations*, to determine “goodness of fit” and examine possible associations between the variables. Results of the chi-square can be found in the findings and discussion sections.

For the second hypothesis, the *self-esteem* variable and *completed education* variable were examined. Prior to running a chi-square between the two variables, this researcher had to identify the *completed education* variable. Variable 407 was identified via the question: *What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?*. Descriptive statistics were run on variable 407 and then recoded for the purpose of running chi-square associations between completed education level and self-esteem. Options of “some high school (no diploma)” and “graduated from high school” were recoded as value 1, which is categorized as *high school or less*. The following options were recoded as value 2 and categorized as *some college or more*: “1 or 2 years Post-High School Vocational Training or College”, “Associates Degree”, “3 or more years of college (no degree yet)”, “Bachelor’s Degree”, “Some graduate school (no degree yet)”, “Master’s Degree”, “Professional/Doctoral Degree”, and “Other”. Descriptive statistics were then run on the recoded variables, which can be found in the Findings section.

A chi-square was then run between the two recoded variables, *self-esteem* and *completed education level*, to determine “goodness of fit” and examine possible associations between the variables. Results of the chi-square can be found in the findings and discussion sections.

Findings

Data was collected to gather information regarding students’ view of self and impact on their aspirations for academic achievement, as well as achieved academic achievement. The following hypothesis were made:

1. Students with higher views of self will have higher academic aspirations than that of their counterparts with low views of self.
2. Students with higher views of self will have higher levels of achieved academic outcomes than their counterparts with low views of self.

The purpose of data analysis was to support the hypotheses made by the researcher.

The Sample

The research question for the study is: What are the demographics of the survey participants? Table 1 reports multiple nominal variables to describe the survey sample. The researchers gathered data on national origin, gender, age, and grade level. The first variable measures the participants’ self-identified national origin. The 755 participants all self-identified as Mexican. Of the 755, 389 were male (51.5%) and 366 were female (48.5%). The results indicate there was a fair distribution of male and female respondents. Table 1 also displays respondent age. The possible options ranged from 12 years old to 17 years old. The mean age for the participants was 14.2 with a standard deviation of 0.873. The ratio variable, grade level, measures the grade of the participants. The possible options ranged from 7th grade to 10th grade. The mean grade level was 8.38, with a standard deviation of 0.485.

Table 1. *Respondent Demographics*

Variable	Question	Responses
National Origin	What is the country of your national origin?	100% Mexico (n=755)
Gender	What is your gender?	51.5% Male; 48.5% Female (n=755)
Age	What is the average age of participants?	Mean age: 14.2; Min: 12; Max: 17; Std. Deviation: 0.873 (n=755)
Grade Level	What is the average grade level of participants?	Mean grade level: 8.38 Min: 8; Max: 9; Std. Deviation: 0.485 (n=755)

It is important to note that the study from which data was gathered is longitudinal in nature across 15 years. The methods section gives in-depth information regarding the Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Study, on which this data analysis is based. Descriptive statistics show participants averaged 14 years of age during the First Tier. Second Tier participants were an average of 17 years old and Third Tier participants were an average of 24 years old.

Association Between Self-Esteem and Education Aspirations

The research question for this study is: What is the relationship between self-esteem and educational aspirations among Mexican-American respondents? Prior to understanding the relationships, descriptive statistics had to be run on the quantity of high and low self-esteem amongst participants. Table 2 and Figure 1 show data from Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale post-recoding. Further explanation of the recoding process can be found in the Methods section. In the Table and Figure, low self-esteem is recoded as 1. High self-esteem is recoded as 2 based on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale coding. Of the 755 participants, 598 answers were valid. Table 2

and Figure 1 show that 458 respondents have high self-esteem (76.6% of valid responses), while 140 respondents have low self-esteem (23.4% of valid responses).

Table 2: High and Low Self-Esteem Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	140	18.5	23.4	23.4
	2.00	458	60.7	76.6	100.0
	Total	598	79.2	100.0	
Missing	System	157	20.8		
Total		755	100.0		

Figure 1. High and Low Self-Esteem Distribution

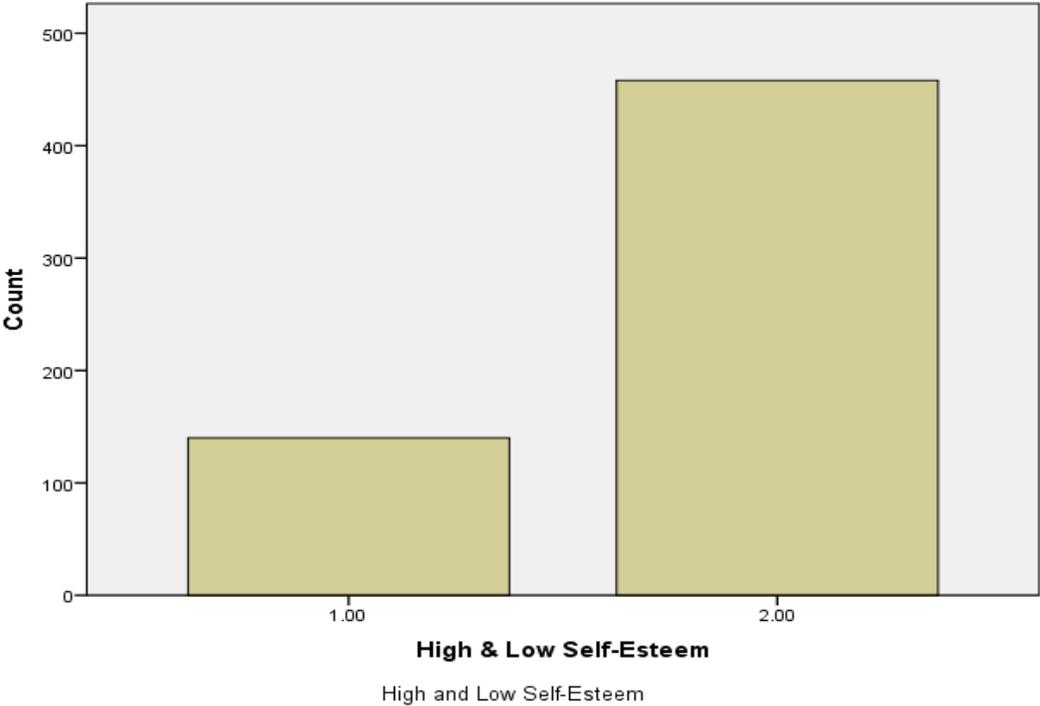


Table 3 measures the respondents’ aspirations for academic achievement. The variable is operationalized with the item “Education Aspiration”. Academic aspirations of receiving a high

school diploma or lower were recoded as 1, and attending “some college” or higher were recoded as 2. The research question for the descriptive statistics is: What are the academic aspirations of Mexican youth? The findings shown in Table 3 indicate that 93 participants (12.4%) aspire to graduate high school or less and 659 participants (87.6%) aspire to attend some college or more. These findings show that the large majority of the sample aspire to further their education beyond high school.

Table 3. *Respondent education aspiration*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	93	12.3	12.4	12.4
	2.00	659	87.3	87.6	100.0
	Total	752	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		755	100.0		

A Chi-Square test was run between variables of High and Low Self-Esteem (Table 2) and Education Aspirations (Table 3) to determine if there was an association between the two variables. The crosstabulation of the variables was run to see if there was statistical significance in the association, as well. The research question for this study is: Is there an association between Self-Esteem and Education Aspiration? The hypothesis for this study is: There is an association between Self-Esteem and Education Aspiration. The null hypothesis for the study is: There is no association between Self-Esteem and Education Aspiration.

Per the case summary, there were 596 valid responses applied to the crosstabulation. Table 4 shows that, of the respondents with low self-esteem, 24 respondents (17.3% of the group), aspired to receive a high school diploma or less; 115 respondents with low self-esteem

aspired to receive some college education or greater (82.7% of the group). Of the respondents who had high self-esteem 45 respondents (9.8% of the group) aspired to receive a high school diploma or less; 412 respondents with high self-esteem aspired to receive some college education or greater (90.2% of the group). This crosstabulation indicates that Mexican youth that had high self-esteem were more likely than those with low self-esteem to have higher aspiration for future education attainment.

Table 5 displays that the p-value for the chi-square of the two variables is .017. Since the p-value is less than .05, we reject the null hypothesis. This data does support the association between self-esteem and academic aspirations. Therefore, the data supports the first research hypothesis that students with higher views of self (self-esteem) will have higher academic aspiration than that of their counterparts with low views of self.

Table 4. *Crosstabulation for Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Education Aspiration (Recoded)*

			Aspiration		Total
			1.00	2.00	
High & Low Self-Esteem	1.00	Count	24	115	139
		Expected Count	16.1	122.9	139.0
		% within High & Low Self-Esteem	17.3%	82.7%	100.0%
		% within Aspiration	34.8%	21.8%	23.3%
		% of Total	4.0%	19.3%	23.3%
	2.00	Count	45	412	457
		Expected Count	52.9	404.1	457.0
		% within High & Low Self-Esteem	9.8%	90.2%	100.0%
		% within Aspiration	65.2%	78.2%	76.7%
		% of Total	7.6%	69.1%	76.7%
Total	Count	69	527	596	
	Expected Count	69.0	527.0	596.0	

% within High & Low Self-Esteem	11.6%	88.4%	100.0%
% within Aspiration	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total	11.6%	88.4%	100.0%

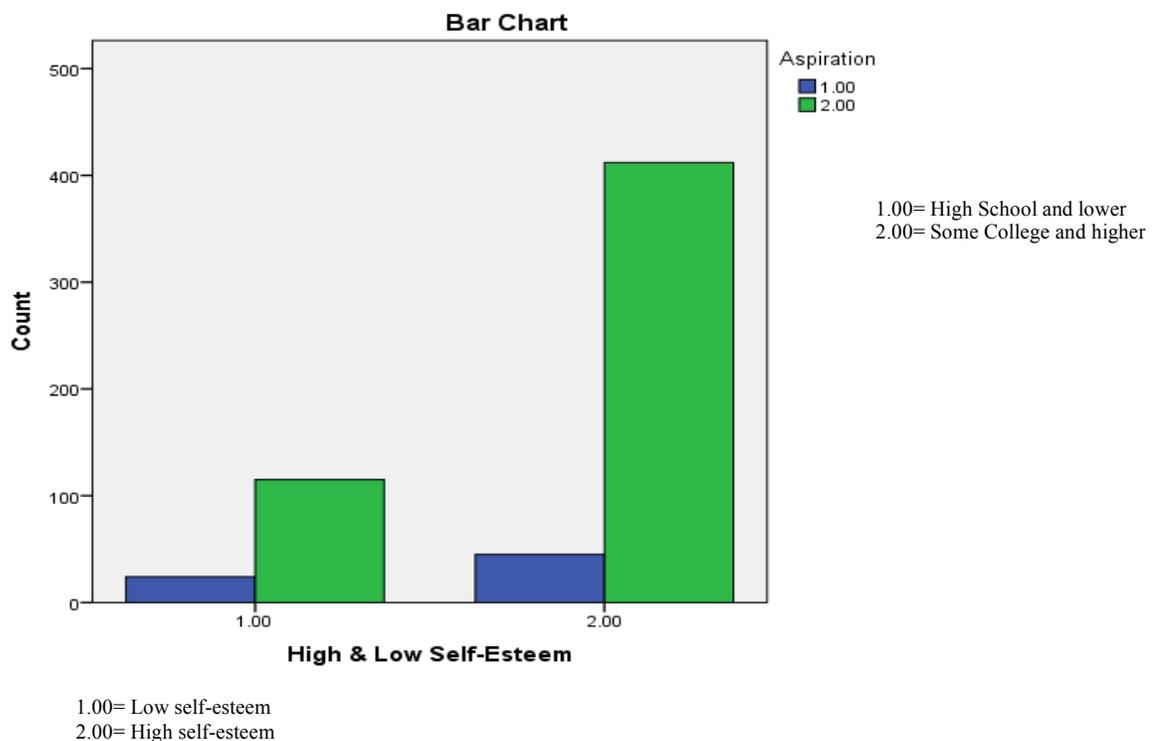
Table 5. Chi Square Test for Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Education Aspiration (Recoded)

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.731 ^a	1	.017		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.029	1	.025		
Likelihood Ratio	5.290	1	.021		
Fisher's Exact Test				.023	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.722	1	.017		
N of Valid Cases	596				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.09.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Figure 2. Bar Chart of Chi-Square Test for Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Education Aspiration (Recoded)



Since the chi-square is significant, we can conclude that Mexican youth with higher self-esteem will have higher aspirations for their academic achievement. However, it is important to note that the majority individuals in the low self-esteem category had aspirations to seek education beyond high school (n=155, 82.7%). Therefore, researchers should examine implications for future research in the discussion section.

Association Between Self-Esteem and Completed Education

The research question for this study is: What is the relationship between self-esteem and completed education level among Mexican-American respondents? Prior to understanding the relationship, descriptive statistics had to be run on the completed education level of respondents.

The descriptive statistics in Table 6 measures the respondents' completed education in the Third Tier of the survey. The research question for the study is: What is the completed education of the participants in the survey sample? The variable is operationalized with the item "Completed Education". Completed education of a high school diploma or less was recoded as 1, and attending "some college" or greater was recoded as 2. The findings in Table 6 show that 412 of the original 755 respondents participated in answering the question. Of the 412 respondents, 156 received a high school diploma or less (37.9%) and 256 participants received "some college" education or more (62.1%). These findings show that a majority of the sample continued their education beyond high school.

Table 6. *Completed Education*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	156	20.7	37.9	37.9
	2.00	256	33.9	62.1	100.0
	Total	412	54.6	100.0	
Missing	System	343	45.4		
Total		755	100.0		

A second Chi-Square test was run between variables of High and Low Self-Esteem (Table 2) and Completed Education (Table 6) to determine if there was an association between the two variables. The crosstabulation of the variables was run to see if there was statistical significance in the association, as well. The research question for this study is: Is there an association between Self-Esteem and Completed Education? The hypothesis for this study is: There is an association between Self-Esteem and Completed Education. The null hypothesis for the study is: There is no association between Self-Esteem and Completed Education.

There were 382 valid responses applied to the crosstabulation between self-esteem and completed education. Table 7 displays that, of the respondents with low self-esteem, 38 respondents (43.7% of the group), received a high school diploma or less; 49 respondents with low self-esteem completed some college education or greater (56.3% of the group). Of the respondents who had high self-esteem 103 respondents (34.9% of the group) completed a high school education or less; 192 respondents with high self-esteem completed some college education or greater (65.1% of the group). This crosstabulation indicates that Mexican youth that had high self-esteem were slightly more likely than those with low self-esteem to have completed some college education or greater.

Table 8 displays that the p-value for the chi-square of the two variables is .137. Since the p-value is greater than .05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This data does not support the association between self-esteem and completed education. Therefore, the data does not support the second research hypothesis that students with higher views of self (self-esteem) will have higher completed education levels than that of their counterparts with low views of self.

Table 7. *Crosstabulation of Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Completed Education (Recoded)*

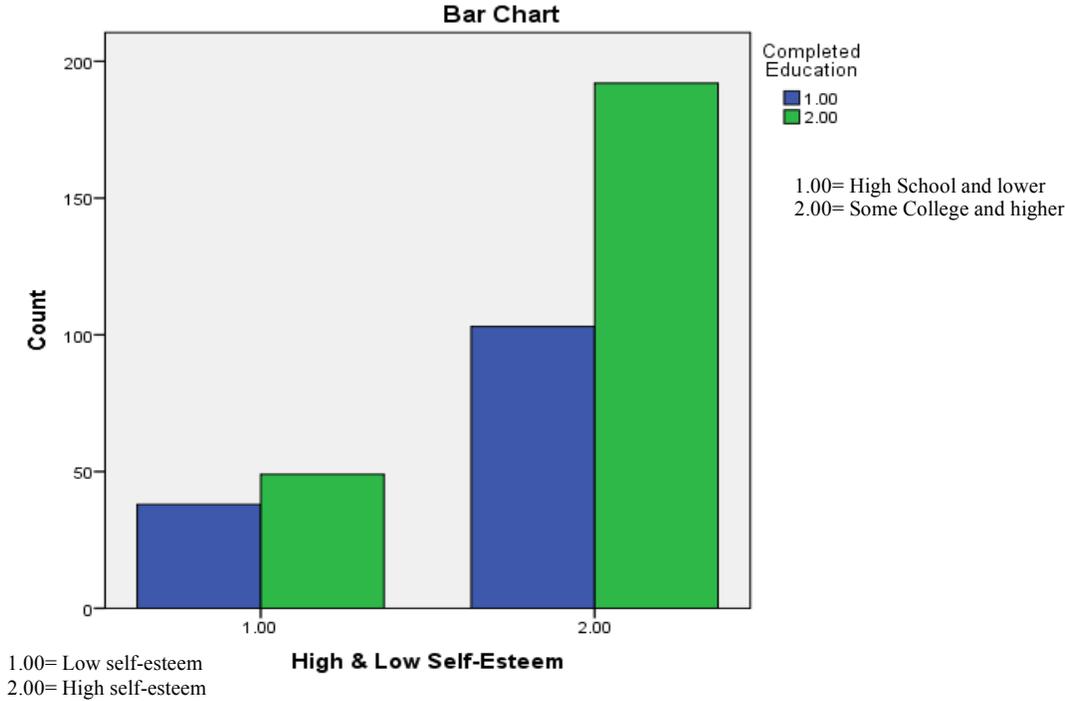
			Completed Education		Total
			1.00	2.00	
High & Low Self-Esteem	1.00	Count	38	49	87
		% within High & Low Self-Esteem	43.7%	56.3%	100.0%
		% within Completed Education	27.0%	20.3%	22.8%
		% of Total	9.9%	12.8%	22.8%
	2.00	Count	103	192	295
		% within High & Low Self-Esteem	34.9%	65.1%	100.0%
		% within Completed Education	73.0%	79.7%	77.2%
		% of Total	27.0%	50.3%	77.2%
Total	Count	141	241	382	
	% within High & Low Self-Esteem	36.9%	63.1%	100.0%	
	% within Completed Education	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	36.9%	63.1%	100.0%	

Table 8. Chi-Square Test for Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Completed Education (Recoded)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.215 ^a	1	.137		
Continuity Correction ^b	1.855	1	.173		
Likelihood Ratio	2.183	1	.140		
Fisher's Exact Test				.164	.087
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.210	1	.137		
N of Valid Cases	382				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 32.11.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Figure 3. Bar Graph of Chi-Square Results for Self-Esteem (Recoded) and Completed Education (Recoded)



The chi-square is not significant; therefore, researchers cannot conclude that persons with high self-esteem are more likely to complete higher levels of education, or that persons with low

self-esteem are less likely to complete higher levels of education. However, researchers should examine implications for future research in the discussion section.

Discussion

The research questions examined in the secondary data analysis were: is there a relationship between self-esteem and academic aspirations and does self-esteem affect educational achievement? In the findings section, the data shows that students with higher self-esteem had higher levels of academic aspiration than the individuals with low self-esteem. However, the data also implied that there is not a significant relationship between self-esteem and education completion; therefore, it cannot be concluded that a student's view of self affects actual education attainment in Mexican-American youth.

Impact of Self-Esteem

Regarding the first hypothesis, the research displayed that the relationship between self-esteem and academic aspirations is statistically significant. Previous research found that intrinsic motivations are related to positive outcomes such as enjoyment in the learning process, increased critical thinking skills, and higher academic achievement (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Deci, et al., 1991; Vansteenkiste, et al., 2006; Aretakis, et al. 2015). Aspirations, as used in the study, are an example of intrinsic motivators. Based on the data collected in this study, self-esteem impacts individuals' aspirations, or intrinsic motivators, meaning self-esteem could either positively or negatively impact an individual's critical thinking skills, desire to learn, and enjoyment in the learning process. Research gathered in this study loosely correlates to previously gathered data. There is research to support that intrinsic motivation can positively impact self-esteem. However, it is unclear which variable causes what outcome. Research does not specify if the relationship is causal or symbiotic.

These results hold direct significance for social workers. In the lifespan development, adolescence is a time where relationships, self-image, and perceptions are at the forefront of brain development. Adolescents are moving towards adulthood independence and creating their own identity. In working with Mexican youth, social workers must be aware of the connection between self-esteem and aspirations, especially within the school setting. Being sensitive to the impact self-esteem may have on other aspects of life will inform practice. It will allow social workers to build stronger therapeutic alliances, as well as understand various systems affecting Mexican youth.

The second hypothesis, examining the relationship between self-esteem and completed education, was found to be statistically insignificant. The researcher hoped to find data that supported a relationship between self-esteem and level of education completion, but no association was uncovered. There was little research linking self-esteem to achieved education levels, and this study did little to uncover more information regarding an association between the two variables, but limitations on the data set may have impacted analytic outcomes. As mentioned previously, there is a relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement. Given that there was an association between self-esteem and education aspiration in the first hypothesis, it is interesting that a relationship does not exist between self-esteem and education completion/attainment. Due to the significance between self-esteem and aspirations found in the first hypothesis, researchers should continue to investigate the role self-esteem plays within the school setting and overall academic success.

Although there was no statistical significance found in the second hypothesis, the results still affect social work practice. When working with adolescents who self-identify as Mexican, social workers should be concerned with social and emotional functioning, as they are with every

client. This includes assessing the impact self-esteem has on overall functioning. However, the results of the secondary data analysis display that it is not likely that self-esteem will directly affect the level of future education attainment. It may be more beneficial for social workers to focus on how self-esteem may impact motivation for success, thus affecting multiple areas of a student's learning process, not just completed education level.

Alternative Explanations

The goal of the study is to discover new associations and relationships, not prove a theory. Therefore, it is important to analyze and discuss possible explanations for the findings. This adds to the validity and reliability of the research as more correlations can be discovered in the future. In analyzing the gathered data, it is important to note that there could be a myriad of variables affecting the outcomes of the results.

Previous research examined the multitude of variables that affect first and second generation immigrant youth in achieving high levels of completed education. As examined in the literature review, Latino immigrant youth face challenges in the school environment that white majority students do not face as frequently. Some of these variables include familial obligations, caring for family members, assisting with finances, and understanding of the school system, financial insecurity, amongst other variables. All of these factors, and more, were not measured in the study, but could impact participant's ability to attend higher education. These variables could potentially occur later in the respondents' lives; therefore, did not impact self-esteem, but later impacted their completed education.

Limitations

There are limitations involved in every study. Assessing limitations adds to the reliability and validity of the study, as well. One limitation mentioned previously, is the inability to assess

the impact of other variables on completed education or self-esteem. This makes it difficult for researchers to draw conclusions on what variable actually impacts completed education levels. Another limitation of the study and data collection was the recoding process. Because of the presented hypotheses, researchers had to recode several variables into two categories. Self-esteem was divided by the researchers and deemed high or low based on a numerical score. Educational aspiration and completed education were also recoded from five categories to two. The findings could have been skewed based on the recoding. If an original variable or category were transferred to a different recoded variable, this may have a large effect on the findings of the study.

The data set also proved to be a limitation itself. The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study is a Three Tier study collected over the span of 15 years, from 1991 to 2006. The data originally gathered is potentially 25 years old. Social contexts, community implications, and systems have all changed over the span of 25 years. The information collected may no longer pertain to adolescent Mexican students, as the social and cultural climate might have changed in that time period. Apart from the time frame of the original data collection, the secondary data analysis sample had its challenges, as well. The data analyzed was taken from all three tiers of the original study. The original sample involved 755 participants, but the ending sample involved only 412 of the original 755 respondents. Outcomes of this study could have been different if all 755 original respondents participated through the three tiers of the study.

By nature, limitations seem like a negative aspect of a study; however, they can help inform practice and give direction for future research. The aforementioned limitations only point to the necessity for increased awareness and knowledge of how self-esteem affects Mexican

youth and if it is a relevant variable to study. Limitations can inform future research and give social workers direction in their practice.

Implications for Future Research

Given the results of this study, there are two main implications for future research. In response to the findings of the first hypothesis, future research should focus on in-depth analysis of the type of educational aspiration. This may reveal that students with high self-esteem have greater aspirations beyond 'some college' such as graduate or doctoral degrees than students with low self-esteem in the same category. The findings from the second hypotheses could not demonstrate that there was any association between self-esteem and completed education. Future research should examine the relationship between aspirations for academic achievement and completed education levels, rather than self-esteem and completed education levels. This might explore motivations behind completing higher levels of education rather than how self-esteem impacts completed education level.

Apart from self-esteem, researchers can examine other variables that may affect completed education levels, as well. Potential areas of interest include, English proficiency, parental involvement, annual household income, adverse childhood experiences, and a plethora of other variables collected in the data set. This will give researchers further insight on barriers and variables that may impact self-esteem in Mexican youth, therefore affecting their motivation for success. Expanding upon the knowledge of such variables could lead to a better understanding of how to serve and work alongside Mexican youth in the American school system.

A next step in research, as it pertains to this study, would be to examine the relationship between aspiration and completed education. This may uncover that aspiration levels impact

completed education more than self-esteem. This information could help educators and social workers better understand variables that impact education completion among Mexican youth. Furthermore, it may reveal trends regarding the impact of self-esteem. For example, if there is a significant relationship between educational aspirations and completed education level, researcher can deduce that self-esteem may impact completed education since it was demonstrated that it impact aspirations among Mexican participants. Regardless of the outcomes, social workers need to construct further research about self-esteem and its impact on youth, especially within a cultural competent context.

Conclusion

With the demographics of the United States changing, it is crucial for social workers to address the needs of students of color. The Latino population is the largest minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) and the school system should do everything in their power to meet the needs of Latino students. The Latino youth will grow up to be the leaders of this country; therefore, it should be a shared responsibility to educate, support, and enhance the Latino youth living in the United States today. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the education system, especially in Minnesota.

Education is power. It helps prevent against unemployment, institutionalization, and economic hardship. Obtaining high levels of education can help break cycles of injustice and prevent negative outcomes amongst Latino students. Therefore, it is vital for social workers to understand all the possible barriers that exist for youth in order to best support Latino youth on their endeavors to achieving high educational goals. This includes the social and emotional functioning of self-esteem.

This study demonstrated that self-esteem does, in fact, impact Mexican youth's aspirations for educational achievement. However, it failed to show that self-esteem affected the completed education level of Mexican participants. The important factor to note, though, is that self-esteem did have an association to the intrinsic aspirations of the students. This demonstrates that further research be done to delve more deeply into the relationship self-esteem has on academic success, motivation, and achievement of Mexican and Latino youth.

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