

Educational Aspirations and Acculturation: Self-Esteem in Second-Gen Adolescents

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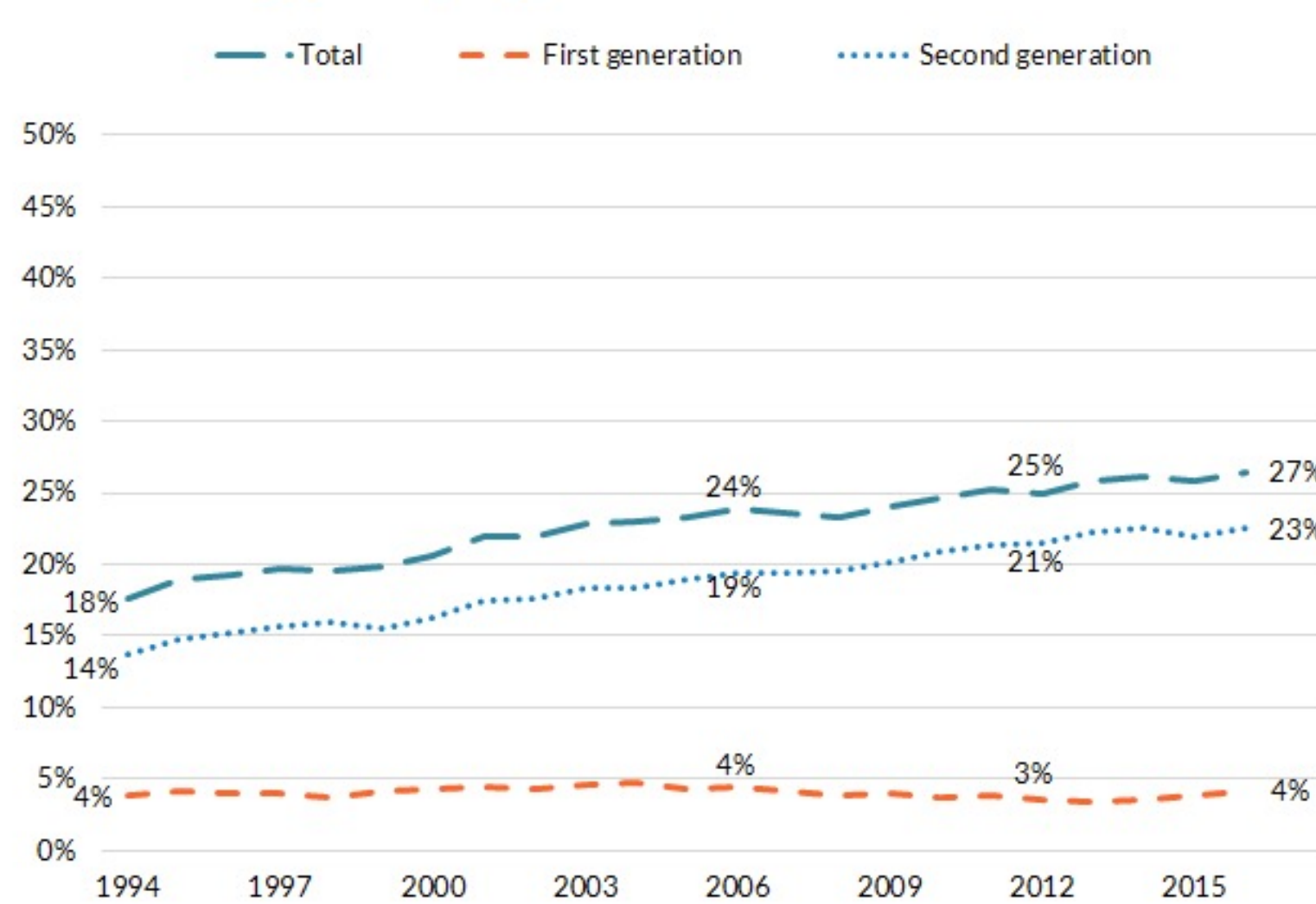
ABSTRACT

Self-esteem can be impacted by several environmental and systemic factors than an individual experiences. Self-esteem is also a contributing factor to overall mental health and can affect one's overall well-being. The objective of the current study was to examine how self-esteem is impacted by academic aspirations and acculturation amongst second-generation adolescents. This secondary data analysis utilized the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS). Results from the study indicated that self-esteem amongst adolescents was impacted by educational aspirations, race, as well as the acculturation process they experienced in the United States. Results from the current study can support mental health professionals as they service adolescents from diverse racial backgrounds to increase mental health outcomes.

INTRODUCTION and LITERATURE REVIEW

- The United States is home to roughly 16.7 million second-generation adolescents, otherwise known as children of immigrants (Child Trends, 2018). In adolescence, individuals undergo much emotional and mental development.
- Second-generation adolescents of immigrants report a higher degree of pressure regarding attaining their educational aspirations; simultaneously, they also report a higher degree of support (Enriquez, 2011).
- The mental health of a second-generation adolescent also decreases when they struggle to acculturate to a new society and community, creating discomfort and instability (Perez, 2016).

Percentage of U. S. Children Younger than 18 Who Are Immigrants,* by Generation: 1994-2017



* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. First-generation immigrant children were born outside of the United States and second-generation immigrant children were born inside of the United States or its territories.
Source: Child Trends' original analysis of data from the Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 1994-2017.

PURPOSE and HYPOTHESIS

Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to examine the impacts of educational aspirations and acculturation on levels of self-esteem amongst second-generation adolescents in the United States.
- This study was created in hopes to understand how factors such as educational aspirations and acculturation can impact self-esteem within a cohort uniquely characterized by

Hypothesis

- The hypothesis for this study is as follows: Adolescents who identify as second-generation may have lower levels of self-esteem compared to adolescents who do not identify as second-generation children of immigrants.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design & Data Collection Procedures

- The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (otherwise known as CILS) examined how second-generation children of immigrants adapted to the culture and ways of living of the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).
- The original study was conducted in 1992 in the cities of Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and San Diego (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).
- CILS utilized paper-and-pencil surveys for students to report their answers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).
- The current study is a secondary data analyses of the data from the original CILS study. The current study is also classified as a cross-sectional study.

Sample & Sampling Method

- The total sample size of the project boasted a total of 5,262 adolescents. Research participants identified with different racial groups, but all were second-generation children of immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).
- The average age of the respondents was 14.23 years; males and females represented the study at 48.9 percent and 51.1 percent, respectively. 21 percent of the study consisted of Asian respondents, 11.6 percent of participants were White, 5.3 percent were Black, 19.2 percent of the study maintained Hispanic respondents, and 9.3 percent of the study's participants identified as multi-racial.
- Inclusion criteria for this study specifically required that research participants were second-generation children of immigrants, where at least one parent was born in a different country than the United States; individuals also qualified if the children in the study were born abroad but brought to the United States at an early age (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007). Individuals were not eligible for this study if they were not second-generation children of immigrants.

Measures

- The major variables in the current study included self-esteem, acculturation, and educational aspirations.
- Self-esteem was the dependent variable in the current study.
- The independent variable of educational aspirations was characterized by questions that asked how important grades were to the participant, as well as a question asking the highest level of education they believe they would be able to attain (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).
- The second independent variable of acculturation was measured by a question asking research participants how much they agreed with the idea that the American way of life weakened their family (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).

RESULTS

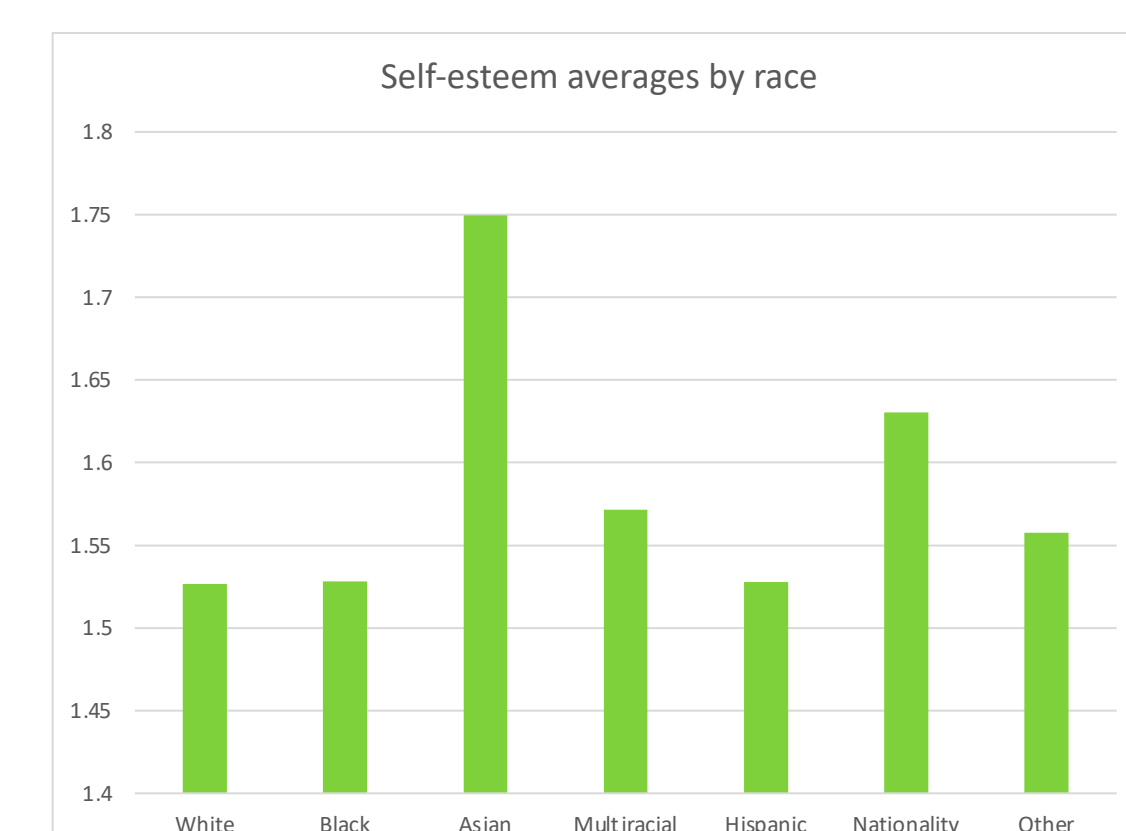
One-way ANOVA

- A significant result was found between race and self-esteem. Study participants who identified as Asian had a higher self-esteem average than all other respondents of different race categories.
- There was a significant result between the relationship of acculturation and self-esteem. A Bonferroni's post hoc test was used to determine the nature of the difference between acculturation and self-esteem. Generally, study participants felt that acculturation was negatively affected and thus affected self-esteem levels. Most respondents agreed a little bit that the acculturation process in American weakened family dynamics, compared to respondents who either agreed a lot or disagreed a lot with the statement.

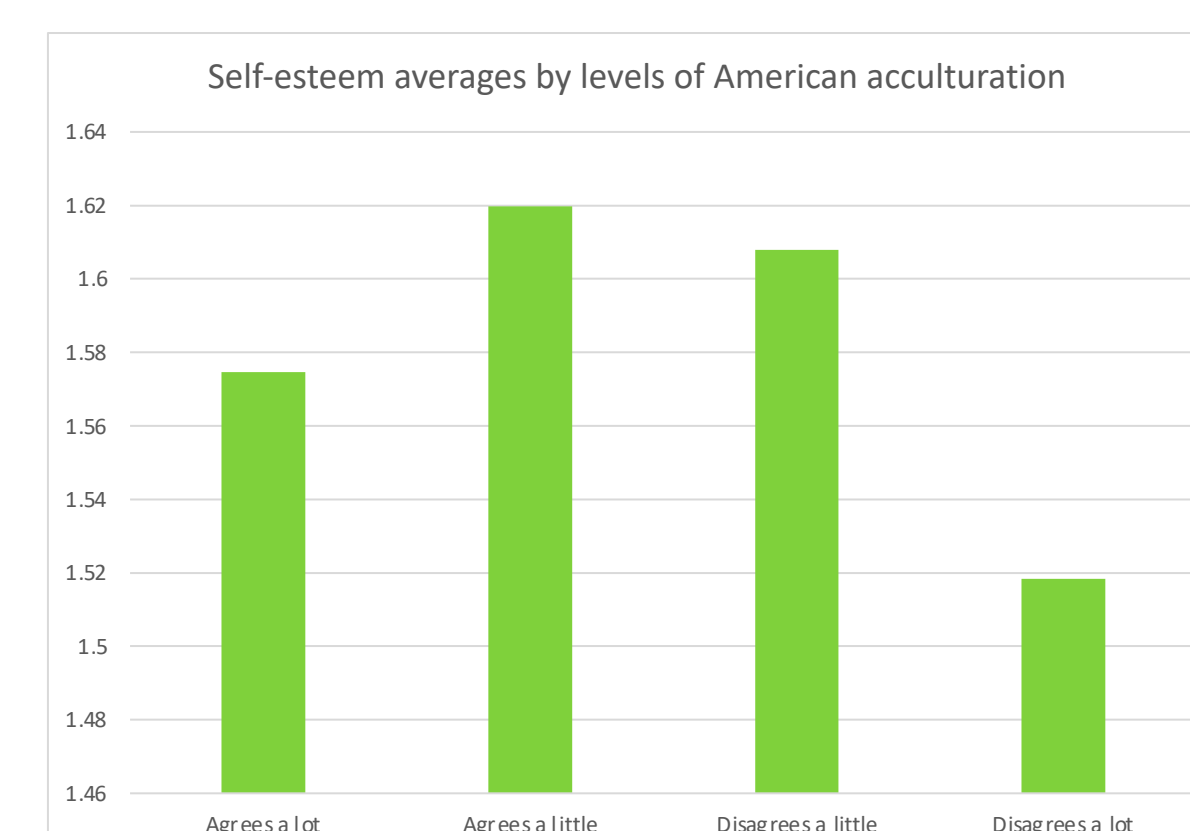
Correlations

- Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among educational aspirations, age, and self-esteem. The results of the correlation analysis showed that all correlations were statistically significant.

One-way ANOVA: Race and Self-Esteem



One-Way ANOVA: Acculturation and Self-Esteem



Correlations: Educational Aspirations, Age, and Self-Esteem

Correlations on self-esteem.

| | Self-esteem | Educational Aspirations | Age of Respondent |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Self-esteem | 1 | | |
| Educational aspirations | -.29** | 1 | |
| Respondent age | .05** | -.13** | 1 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

- The findings in the current study lend importance to social work practice because it addresses a specific need for mental health for a unique population of adolescents. Applying relevant data to practice will be a benefit for both social workers and clients in improving culturally-relative mental, emotional, and behavioral health supports.
- A strength of this study was the sheer number of participants in the original study, which help to diversify the provided answers. Another strength to consider was the breadth of questions related to acculturation, self-esteem, and academic experiences.
- One limitation of the study was the usage of secondary data, as all original research presented in its final form and could not be fixed for further clarification or review.
- Implications from this study continue to reinforce the importance of understanding the interaction between self-esteem and adolescents.
- Mental health professionals servicing adolescents both in and out of school settings can utilize interventions in which activities are appropriate and consider the cultural context of a student.
- Early intervention and prevention reinforces the importance of mental health and well-being to support adolescents' overall development and success, especially second-generation adolescents, who must balance the maintenance of American ideals while also subscribing to the familial and cultural values they were raised upon.
- Future research should explore the creation of mental health interventions that directly addresses the topic of self-esteem amongst adolescents, especially in the second generation. Future research can create accessible and equitable programs to support the adolescents, families, and the communities to positively and sustainably increase mental health and well-being outcomes.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my family for their constant support and encouragement, as well as to Dr. Gordon Capp, who generously provided his expertise and support throughout this process!