Effects of a Role Model Program on Student Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Determining whether the self-esteem of Hispanic/Latina students would increase as a result of counseling sessions and exposure to role models was examined in this study. The self-esteem of these students was measured by administering a Self-Esteem Inventory in a pretest/posttest format. The self-esteem inventory measured the student’s self-concept, their relationship with family, school, and peers. The results indicated that 4 out of 9 students showed a significant increase in self-esteem, while 5 showed no change. These findings demonstrate that although there were some students who did not experience an increase in self-esteem, there were 4 who did show a significant increase. These findings can be used as a guide in finding ways to increase the self-esteem of Hispanic/Latina students.
Introduction

Improving the self-esteem of Hispanic/Latina students was the goal of this study. This study examined the effectiveness of group counseling sessions with an emphasis on the importance of role models on Hispanic female students and their self-esteem. Students were given a Self-Esteem Inventory at the beginning of 6 counseling sessions than again at the end of the counseling sessions in order to measure the effectiveness of these interventions and the student’s self-esteem.

The students who participated in this study were high school students from the 10th and the 11th grade from Hillsborough County who were not performing well in their classes. These students were referred to the investigator by teachers and counselors after consultation with these individuals it was determined that these students could potentially benefit from participating in this study. Ten students began the counseling interventions and 9 finished one student dropped out by the end of the study.

In order to really affect change in Hispanic/Latino students it is important to first understand their experiences and the problems they have with the educational system. In Hillsborough County some of the issues facing our Latino/Hispanic students include lack of parental involvement due to the language barrier that exists between home and school. Another issue facing our Latino/Hispanic students is the high mobility they experience due to the large percentage of migrant students we have in our school district. Challenging academic course work is also a major factor, as many of our Hispanic/Latino students are not taking advanced courses because they do not believe in themselves and think they cannot do the coursework and often they are not advised to do so. Parenting
also plays an important role due to the cultural differences that exists. Although Hispanic/Latino parents want their children to do well in school many times they are not sure how to help their student and often rely too much on the school and do not engage their student at home to read for pleasure or otherwise and sometimes the school can do more to help. Many parents also feel torn between letting their children attend college and keeping them at home to help the family, they often feel like they are going to lose their child if the child goes off to college, this is because of the importance of family togetherness in the Hispanic community. As a result many students are not really encouraged to attend college (according to Viadero, 2000). These are just some of the issues our students face, what is important is that we recognize these issues and that we use this information as a guide to help encourage our Hispanic/Latina students to do their best and believe in themselves. It is my hope that by building the self-esteem of these Latina students they will be motivated to do well in school and succeed in the future.

Based on the needs of our Latina students it was hypothesized that student self-esteem would increase as a result of counseling sessions that would focus on the importance of role models.

**Review of Related Literature**

A study conducted by Girl Scouts of America indicated that Latina students face many challenges, these challenges include: personal safety, education, literacy, and self-esteem. Results of their study indicate that:

* 34% of Latinas worry about finding people their own age they can talk to and trust (this is more than Caucasian, African American, and Asian)

* 28% of Latinas worry about finding adults they can talk to and trust (this is more than Caucasian, African American, and Asian)
• 26% of Latinas worry about making new friends (yet Latinas 8-17 are more likely to cope with adversity by talking with friends)

• 23% of Latinas feel that they have fewer than three adults to turn to if they were in trouble

This research focuses on these issues facing our Hispanic/Latina students in terms of self-esteem and is aimed at encouraging educators to use this research in order to improve the experiences of our Hispanic/Latina students.

An article published by Independent School (2001) stated that “U. S. schools are not meeting the educational needs of America's fastest-growing female people of color population -- Latinas --according to a new report released today by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation”. This finding emphasizes the need for us as educators to become more involved and aware of the needs of our Latina students. Bryan W. Griffin reported that students who experience an unsuccessful school outcomes become frustrated overtime and may suffer an impaired perception of self, he described this as the frustration self-esteem model (p. 1). I believe that by empowering our students and exposing them to role models that look like them our students will begin to see themselves as being successful and will start to have confidence in themselves and will want to succeed. “Role modeling is an effective and powerful step in achieving success because it supplies us with inspiration and encourages us to move beyond temporary failures. It also stimulates the creative imagination and draws from the subconscious mind ideas and insights which would not come to us unless we were so inspired” (Kenhoe, 1997).

Methodology

This research addressed the needs of 10 Hispanic/Latina students in Hillsborough County, the effects of counseling interventions that focused on the effectiveness of role
models, as well as the self-esteem of these students. This data was analyzed by comparing the mean score of the Self-Esteem Inventory taken by the students on a pre-test/posttest analysis.

**Population:**

One in twelve persons living in this country can trace his or her origins to Latin America. Since 1980, the Hispanic population has increased at a rate five times that of non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, and Asians combined. These statistics show within the school system since one in ten eighth grader is Hispanic. The demographic projections indicate a nearly three percent increase in their numbers for the rest of the 1990’s, and more to double among the African Americans during this same time period. The Hispanic/Latino communities associated with the school include various Latin American immigrants as well as native-born Spanish speakers. Durant High School in Plant City, Florida is located in a rural community in East Hillsborough County and serves a diverse school population. The school population consists of 75% white, 15% Hispanic, 5% black, and 5% other. The population of Hispanic/Latino students associated with this study is comprised of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and a few families from the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Honduras. The majority of our students ride the bus to school since Durant H.S. is located in a rural section of Hillsborough County. These students come from low-income families, 2 of them being children of migrant workers.

**Sampling Procedures:**

A total of ten female students were selected to participate in this study through the use of referrals from teachers, guidance counselors, as well as ESOL teachers. The
participants included 10th and 11th grade students from the Hillsborough County School Districted that were not performing to there fullest potential. Students enrolled in classes for the educable mentally handicapped were excluded from consideration. Requirements for participation in this group included; students who are not performing satisfactorily, students had to be female, and students had to be of Hispanic decent. Participation in this study was voluntary and students could leave the program as they wanted. In fact one student did not finish the six counseling sessions as she moved back to Puerto Rico.

**Study Procedures:**

This study is set up in the pre-experimental design, one group is administered a pretest, exposed to the treatment, and then administer a posttest, success determined by comparing pretest and posttest results. Students were asked to attend counseling sessions twice a week for three weeks. The students met after school and attended counseling sessions that lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Students were given the Self-Esteem Inventory before counseling sessions started and were given the same inventory at the conclusion of the counseling sessions. These counseling interventions focused on learning about the importance of having role models and were aimed at exposing the students with successful individuals from the community that looked like them. This experience gave them the opportunity to hear the stories of successful Hispanic individuals who have triumphed and have overcame obstacles and are now successful in their chosen careers. These community leaders spoke to these young women about some of the challenges and barriers they had to overcome in order to be successful. Counseling interventions included:

1. Getting to know you – An icebreaking activity that gave students the opportunity to learn about each other by interviewing each other in a round robin activity.
2. Who are our role models – This session focused on who these girls considered to be their role models. They were asked to talk about who is considered to be a role-model and why.

3. Name 5 Activity – In this activity the students were asked to name successful Latino leaders, and what qualities they had to make them successful.

4. Successful Latino speakers – This was an opportunity for students to listen to 3 successful Latino community leaders who spoke about their experiences and the obstacles they faced.

5. Looking into my future – During this activity the students were asked to reflect on what the speakers had said, and how they could use that information in their own personal lives.

6. Culminating activity/journal writing – This was a culminating activity where we ended our sessions and the students reflected on what they had learned.

Measures:

Self-esteem was measured using the Self-Esteem Inventory. The SEI is a 25 item-scale that measures how students feel about themselves in terms of friendships, family, school, and self-satisfaction. Students were asked to mark statements that pertained to self-esteem as U (usually like me) and L (like me). Students were asked to use a code name in order to keep their identities anonymous.

Data Analysis:

The differences between the mean scores of both pretest and posttest analysis of the Self-Esteem Inventory was measured using an independent, uncorrelated t-test. This analysis was performed to ascertain if a statistically significant difference exist in the self-esteem of Hispanic/Latina students as a result of small group counseling interventions that focused on the importance of role models. The analyzed data will than be compared, studied, and used as a guide for further counseling interventions in order to improve the self-esteem and consequently successes of our Latina student population.
Results

Reporting of Descriptive Demographic Data:

10 students took part in this investigation one of which dropped out at the end of the study; all of the participants were females, as this study focused on increasing the self-esteem of female students. The average age of the participants $X = 15.2$, $STD = 0.667$), there were six sophomores and 4 juniors. The participants were all of Hispanic/Latino decent; these were students who were having difficulties succeeding in school and were identified by teachers, and counselors. These students ranged in terms of socio-economic status and the number of years living in the United States. Gain in self-esteem was measured by subtracting the number of questions answered on the Self-Esteem Inventory that showed positive self-esteem on a pre-test/post test measure from questions that revealed low-esteem. Students were asked to answer 25 questions on the inventory, before they started counseling sessions and were than asked to answer the same inventory after counseling sessions ended.

Reporting of Test Results

Upon completion of treatment phase a follow-up posttest was administered. The posttest data indicated a group mean ($X=15.1$, $STD=4.53$). An examination of means exhibited that the group posttest mean was higher after interventions and the posttest was administered. It is important to note that although the mean score increased overall, when we looked at the girls who were impacted individually, the table below indicates that four out of the nine girls’ self esteemed increased as a result of the counseling interventions administered.
A two-tailed dependent t-test with an alpha level set at 0.05 revealed that \( t_{(8)} = -3.777, p = .005 \), indicating a significant result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>( t_{0.05} )</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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</thead>
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<td>10.55</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-3.777</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data was then examined for sample means. Pretest results revealed a group mean (X = 10.55, STD = 4.69). Upon completion of treatment phase a follow-up post test was administered. The posttest data indicated a group mean (X = 20.0, STD = 4.53).

**Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>15.22</th>
<th>10.55</th>
<th>20.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Std Dev | 0.667 | 4.69  | 4.53 |

An examination of means exhibited that the group mean was higher than the pretest.

Additionally we included that data set from this study to present that this treatment seemed to have significant positive effect for half of this sample.

### Student Pretest and Posttest Scores on the Self-Esteem Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5/25</td>
<td>18/25</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6/25</td>
<td>11/25</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13/25</td>
<td>13/25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>dropped</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>20/25</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12/25</td>
<td>12/25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20/25</td>
<td>20/25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14/25</td>
<td>14/25</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8/25</td>
<td>8/25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations of Study

Three limitations to this study need to be addressed. First, one concern was the truthfulness of the girls in answering the questions in the posttest. During the course of the study, the facilitator and the students developed a bonding relationship. Since the students knew the purpose of the study beforehand, there was concern whether or not they answered the questions to make the facilitator happy. It is important that the girls know the reason for the purpose of the study but after the sessions, one of the girls commented to the group that she loved the sessions and know it made a difference to her. A couple of the other girls agreed, which put in question the validity of the answers. There would be no way to conduct the sessions without a certain amount of bonding between the facilitator and the students. The group dynamics lent to universality among the members. As the group disclosed they became closer and helped each other with problems that were brought up in the group.

The second limitation was trying to schedule the role models at a time when it would be most beneficial to the group. One role model could not come when scheduled which therefore changed the activities of the group for that session. It was not difficult finding the role models to present to the group. The difficulty lay in the scheduling. One presenter is a lawyer and although she scheduled time for the group, she had to cancel when the judge ordered a court appearance for her client. Of course, this was beyond her control, but it was nonetheless inconvenient to the group. The other presenters, who were scheduled through the Community Organizations, Catholic Charities and Hispanic Services, were able to keep their appointments with the group.
Lastly, one of the girls identified as being at-risk has relatively high self-esteem according to the Inventory used. She was identified by her high absenteeism and low academic grades as being at-risk. It was presumed that low self-esteem contributed to her academic failure. Apparently, there were other reasons for her situation which through counseling became apparent. The assumption that all at-risk females have low self-esteem is a limitation that needs to be addressed.

**Evaluation of the hypothesis**

There were two questions in the hypothesis that need to be answered: Does group counseling as an intervention, improve self-esteem in at-risk high school Latina students? And are there positive residual effects on grade point average, attendance, and discipline referrals by improving self-esteem through group counseling?

The first question can be answered with a “yes”, does group counseling as an intervention, improve self-esteem in at-risk high school Latina students? The study began with ten girls and ended with nine. One girl dropped out because she returned back to her native country of Puerto Rico. Of the nine remaining girls, three girls showed a dramatic increase in self-esteem according to the pretest and posttest. One girl showed a slight increase and five girls showed neither an increase nor a decrease. Regardless of how slight the change was, the change indicated an increase in the self-esteem of the girls. Of the five girls that showed no change, four of the girls have relatively low self-esteem. Only one of the girls began with a relatively high degree of self-esteem.

The second question can also be answered by a yes, are there positive residual effects on grade point average, attendance, and discipline referrals by improving self-esteem through group counseling? The girls showed a marked decrease in absenteeism
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during the course of the study. Although, some of the girls still did receive failing marks in some classes for the first nine weeks grading period, they began to improve those grades by attending class and by attending tutoring sessions. The girls agreed to attend tutoring sessions together and this proved to be beneficial. For several of the girls, the main reason they received those failing marks was because they missed too many days of class in the beginning of the term. Towards the end of the term, they attended class more often but it was too late to salvage the grade at that point. After checking discipline referrals, it became evident that only one of the girls had received discipline referrals prior to the study and none of the girls received referrals during the study or after. Discipline referrals were not factors that could be used as a variable for this study. Grade point average and attendance were the two significant variables for this study.

**Implications of the study**

The implications of this study for counselors show potential. The counseling sessions were successful in providing helpful knowledge to the girls who could really use it. The sessions were easily implemented and community members were enthusiastic about doing a service for the school. The girls were motivated to do better even if the pre-test/post-test did not indicate a change in self-esteem. Additionally, the girls were able to gain the perspective of other Latina girls who are experiencing many of the same problems and worries as they are.

This study can provide encouraging results for counselors in other schools who are interested in working with at-risk Latina females. As is evidenced by this study, a counselor can implement a successful program with good community volunteers.
**Recommendations**

One of the recommendations, which is important, is to screen the girls in the study before asking them to participate. It was assumed that the girls with high absenteeism and a low grade point average all have low self-esteem. This apparently was not the case with one of the girls in the study. Her academic failure and high absenteeism was a result of the demands placed on her by her family to care for her younger siblings while her parents went to work.

**Conclusion**

This study was successful and all involved benefited from the experience. The girls were able to help each other with problems that they have in common and became friends as a result of the sessions.

The community leaders who presented were eager to return for any future groups. They expressed their desire to want to help the community and they felt a sense of involvement and satisfaction for having done something good for the community.

The counselor was also enthusiastic as to the results and wants to do a follow up group to determine if the sessions had a lasting effect on the girls.
References


http://www.learnmindpower.com/Pages/importance-role-models.html