EXPLORING WHETHER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS RELATE TO THE HOPED-FOR AND FEARED POSSIBLE SELVES OF LATINX YOUTH

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EXPLORING WHETHER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS RELATE TO THE HOPED-FOR AND FEARED POSSIBLE SELVES OF LATINX YOUTH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
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May 8, 2020
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EXPLORING WHETHER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS RELATE TO THE HOPED-FOR AND FEARED POSSIBLE SELVES OF LATINX YOUTH

By Stephanie Michelle Romo, B.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019

Major Director: Rosalie Corona, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychology

Youth’s hopes and fears for their future (i.e., hoped-for and feared possible selves) are related to their academic and health behavior outcomes. Much of the literature on possible selves focuses on African-American and European-American youth. In a sample of 132 Latinx youth, the present cross-sectional study utilized widely-used measures (i.e., Possible Selves Questionnaire, Beliefs about Education, Youth Risk Surveillance Survey) to identify the content and characteristics (e.g., strategies, balance) of their possible selves; investigate the relationship between contextual factors (e.g., sex, immigrant status) and possible selves; and, explore whether possible selves predicted youth’s beliefs about education and sexual risk behaviors. The most prevalent hoped-for selves were in the achievement and physical health domains, while the most prevalent feared selves were in the risky behavior and achievement domains. Culturally modifying balance was found to increase overall ratings of balance among youth’s selves. We also found that females reported more educational hoped-for selves and feared health selves than males, and that males reported more occupational feared selves than females. Moreover, youth in high school/GED programs reported more traditionally-coded balanced selves and more achievement and occupational hoped-for and feared possible selves than youth in middle school.
Youth born outside of the U.S. (compared to youth born in the U.S.) reported more achievement feared selves and more balanced selves, when using modified coding. Finally, the total number of hoped-for possible selves positively predicted youth’s beliefs about education and traditionally-coded balance negatively predicted beliefs. Possible selves characteristics did not predict youth’s sexual risk behaviors.
Exploring Whether Contextual Factors Relate to the Hoped-for and Feared Possible Selves of Latinx Youth

When youth imagine their future, they begin to establish their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). For instance, youth begin to think about what they hope to become and what they are afraid of becoming. Possible selves are often thought of as the motivational link between values and behaviors. Indeed, studies have demonstrated that possible selves (e.g., balance, strategy specificity/plausibility) are related to youth’s academic outcomes (Bi & Oyserman, 2015; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004; Yowell 2002) and health behaviors such as substance use (Aloise-Young, Hennigan, & Leong, 2001) and sexual behavior (Stein, Roeser & Markus, 1998). Given these findings, researchers developed interventions to increase characteristics of possible selves that relate to improvements in youth’s academic outcomes. Findings from intervention studies demonstrate that possible selves are modifiable and that they promote youth’s academic outcomes and decrease depressive symptoms and in-class misbehavior (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006).

To our knowledge, the current study will be the second in the literature to explore the association between possible and feared selves and Latinx
youth’s outcomes (i.e., their beliefs about education and sexual risk behaviors).

Possible Selves: Definition and Characteristics

Although identity formation is considered a continuous developmental task that is susceptible to change and influence throughout the course of an individual’s life (Castle, Knight, & Watters, 2011), it is during adolescence that youth begin the process of forming their individual identities (Erikson, 1968). Erikson defines adolescence as a “psychosocial moratorium” during which youth try out various roles without having to commit to or suffer the consequences of a particular identity. Through a process of trial and error, youth refine a smaller set of selves which they commit to becoming (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). These possible selves are influenced by factors such as past experiences, past behaviors, and youth’s feelings of self-efficacy (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999).

Possible selves can be short-term (e.g. ‘the self I will become in five years’) or more distally imagined (e.g. ‘the self I want to become as an adult’). Possible selves are often categorized as the selves we hope to become (hoped-for), the selves we expect to become (expected), and the selves we are afraid to become (feared) (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Prior work has identified different possible selves domains such as achievement (i.e., educational, occupational), interpersonal relationships, health and wellbeing, and risky behaviors (Aloise-Young et al., 2001; Stoddard, Pierce, & Schmidt, 2016). Possible selves are considered balanced when individuals report both a positive expectation/hoped-for possible self and feared self in the same domain (Oyserman et al., 2004; Yowell, 2000). For example, a balanced academic possible self occurs when a youth reports a hoped-for or expected possible self that is related to academic success (e.g., getting good grades) and a feared self that is related to academic failure, (e.g., dropping out of school).
Possible selves can also differ in how concretely youth link them with behavioral strategies (e.g. work hard, join a study group) for obtaining those possible selves. Strategies are often assessed for plausibility and specificity, meaning the level of concreteness of one’s reported strategies or increased detail in a strategy, respectively (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2010). Possible selves that are connected to strategies with greater specificity are more effective in promoting behaviors congruent with goals to avoid or attain a self than possible selves connected to less specific strategies (Oyserman et al., 2004). Evoking only a possible self may, for some, conjure an image of an end state that may not sufficiently encourage movement toward a goal, however, evoking both a possible self and detailed strategy can allow for actions to be taken or avoided.

Prior research on possible selves has demonstrated that the most prevalent hoped-for possible selves among youth are in the achievement, interpersonal, and personal well-being domains (Halfond, Corona, & Moon, 2012; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Yowell, 2000). Conversely, feared selves are most often in the risky behavior, achievement, interpersonal, and personal well-being domains (Halfond et al., 2012; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Yowell, 2000). There is typically more dispersion among feared possible selves domains than in hoped-for domains (Halfond et al., 2012; Stoddard et al., 2016; Yowell, 2000). Moreover, strategy specificity is often described as limited (Oyserman et al., 2006; Yowell, 2000) and youth typically report few balanced selves (Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman et al., 2004; Yowell, 2000).

Finally, possible selves differ based on youth’s age, gender (Anthis, Dunkel, & Anderson, 2004; Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Bush, 2000; Yowell, 2000) and other contextual factors such as grade (Stoddard et al., 2016) and past delinquency (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). For
example, girls report more feared selves related to interpersonal relationships compared to boys (Anthis et al., 2004; Knox et al., 2000), who more often report occupational possible and feared selves than girls (Knox et al., 2000; Yowell, 2000). To date, only one study has examined differences in possible selves between youth in middle and high school across different possible self domains (Stoddard et al., 2016). Most studies have examined the possible selves of youth in a certain grade level (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012; Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2010; Yowell, 2002) included youth from different grades without examining grade-level differences (Cadely, Pittman, Kerpleman, & Adler-Baeder, 2011); reported on grade level differences related to a single domain of interest (Aloise-Young et al., 2001); or followed one group of students for years after they completed a possible selves intervention (Oyserman et al., 2006). In the study examining grade level differences, Stoddard, Pierce, and Schmidt (2016) found that across grade levels (sixth-ninth grades) some hopes and fears increased while others decreased. For example, hoped-for possible selves that became more prevalent across the grade levels included health, general success, interpersonal success, honorable traits, and interdependence/confidence. Feared selves that decreased included non-normative behavior and delinquency. Some grade level differences appeared specific to certain grade levels. For example, eighth graders reported more feared possible selves related to academic failure and ninth graders reported more hopes for wealth.

**Possible Selves and Youth Outcomes**

The current literature examining the associations between youth’s possible selves and outcomes primarily focuses on three main areas: academic outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2010; Yowell, 2002); delinquency (Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993; Pierce, Schmidt & Stoddard,
2015), and risk behaviors (Aloise-Young et al., 2001). In addition, intervention studies targeting balance and strategy plausibility for academic possible selves explored whether the intervention improved youth academic outcomes and mental health/well-being.

**Academic outcomes.** While youth’s academic possible selves predict increases in grade point average (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006), students are unlikely to reach their academic goals without balance in their positive expected/hoped-for and feared possible selves and without specific (e.g., asking teacher for help) strategies (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006). Academic possible selves that are connected to specific strategies are more effective in promoting changes in behavior congruent with avoiding or attaining a self than possible selves without specific strategies (Oyserman et al., 2004). Additional findings indicate that a greater number of non-academic possible selves may undermine a student’s self-control (Bi & Oyserman, 2015), while having specific strategies (across domains) may improve self-control as it relates to behavior in class.

Intervention research involving possible selves has focused primarily on academic outcomes. Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee (2002; 2006) developed two school-based interventions to help youth link academic possible selves to specific/detailed behavioral strategies. Youth in middle school who participated in the first intervention reported a greater sense of bonding to school, more concern about performing well in school, more balanced possible selves, and more plausible strategies (e.g., concrete, self-regulating) than youth in the control group at post-test (Oyserman et al., 2002). Further, youth who participated in the second intervention reported improved grades, higher levels of academic initiative, and higher standardized test scores than youth in the control condition at post-test. Additionally, youth in the intervention reported fewer
depressive symptoms, absences, and in-school misbehavior than youth in the control condition (Oyserman et al., 2006).

**Delinquency.** Early research examining the relationship between delinquency and possible selves explored the expected, hoped-for, and feared possible selves of African American and European American youth in sixth through twelfth grade with varying levels of operationalized delinquency (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Youth with higher levels of delinquency reported less balance between their expected and feared possible selves, more expected negative selves, and more feared selves related to crime (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). In another study, Oyserman and Saltz (1993) found that youth involved with a detention center reported less balance and fewer efforts to attain or avoid their possible selves than youth in public school. Feared delinquency-related possible selves have also been found to moderate the relationship between negative peer behaviors and self-reported violent delinquency (Pierce et al., 2015) such that youth who reported feared delinquency self-reported higher levels of violent delinquency in the past month.

**Risk Behaviors.** Prior work has also explored the relationship between possible selves and health risk behaviors. In a sample of 160 eighth graders, Stein, Roeser, and Markus (1998) found that identifying as female and reporting "popular" possible selves (operationalized as a self-schema score) in eighth grade predicted greater risk behaviors (i.e., tobacco use, alcohol use, whether youth had/had not had sexual intercourse, GPA below C-) in ninth grade. Additionally, they found that risk behaviors in eighth grade predicted greater endorsement of “deviant” possible selves in ninth grade. In a diverse sample of youth, Aloise-Young, Hennigan and Leong (2001) found that balance between expected and feared possible selves was related to lower levels of substance use. Moreover, they found a negative relationship between the number of
positive expected selves and substance use among eighth and ninth graders; however, this relationship was not significant among sixth and seventh graders. Finally, the number of positive expected selves was related to substance use among girls, while the percent balance was related to substance use among boys.

While Aloise-Young et al. (2001) replicated Stein et al.’s (1998) finding that possible selves predicted youth’s substance use, to our knowledge, no studies have replicated the finding that possible selves may be related to sex behaviors among youth. Moreover, a limitation of Stein et al.’s study is their conceptualization of risk behaviors. Initiating sexual intercourse is not in itself a sexual risk behavior during adolescence (National Academics of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Behaviors that place youth at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection or having an unplanned pregnancy include not using condoms and/or other contraception and using alcohol or other substances that can impair judgment (Kann et al., 2018).

Culture and Possible Selves: The Experience of Latinx Youth

Much of the literature on possible selves has been conducted with majority African American or European American samples (Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993; Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006). Given that possible selves are socially constructed and reinforced, the possible selves of youth with diverse identities may differ based on race/ethnicity and associated cultural factors. For instance, the lived experiences of Latinx youth are shaped by the intersection of a number of unique contextual factors (e.g., immigrant status, acculturative processes) that may affect the possible selves they form and how those possible selves relate to their behaviors. Therefore, it is important to explore the types of possible selves reported by Latinx youth, as it cannot be assumed that they are similar to youth from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
Latinx youth possible selves. Given the large Latinx presence in the U.S., it is surprising how limited the research examining the hoped-for and feared possible selves of Latinx youth has been to date. Within the available literature, Latinx youth, like their non-Latinx peers, report possible selves in a variety of domains. For example, a prevalent domain reported by Latinx youth is the achievement domain, specifically educational and occupational possible selves (Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002; Oyserman et al., 2004; Halfond et al., 2012; Gonzalez, Stein, Prandoni, Eades, & Magalhaes, 2015). Latinx youth also report hoped-for and feared possible selves in interpersonal (e.g., family, peers) and personal-wellbeing domains (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Halfond et al., 2012; Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002). One study also found that Latinx youth reported hoped-for possible selves in a cultural roots domain (Halfond et al., 2012).

Similar to other youth, the hopes and fears that Latinx youth report for their futures appear to relate to their context. For example, Kao (2000) reported that Black, Asian, and Latinx youths’ feared selves focused on avoiding failures commonly associated with group stereotypes (e.g., Latinx manual laborer). Similarly, Daisey and José-Kampfner (2002) found nearly three-fourths of Latinx students in their sample drew Latinas as domestic workers and very few drew Latinas in professional careers. Furthermore, the impact that documentation status can have on perceptions of future possible selves was illustrated in a recent study (Gonzalez et al., 2015). When youth were asked to report the possible selves they have for themselves, youth reported hoped-for selves related to achievement hopes (e.g., business person, computer engineer, cosmetologist, chef) and financial hopes (e.g., earn enough to take care of myself), while fears centered around financial concerns (e.g., not having enough money to pay for college), risky behaviors (e.g., “one bad decision could take me away from my goal.”), and documentation status. However, when asked about their perceptions of an "undocumented" boy or girl’s future,
youth largely reported on barriers students would face (e.g., rejection from colleges based on citizenship status, language barriers, difficulties finding employment) rather than what they could achieve. The general theme for responses related to the future of an undocumented boy was that there was, “Not much a person can do without papers.” Conversely, the future youth envisioned for an undocumented girl centered around staying home and raising children, which was mostly attributed to colleges not accepting someone without documentation. Gonzalez and colleagues (2015) used these findings to argue that Latinx students in mixed-status communities (e.g., individuals with and without documentation) may internalize the message that “there is no hope for undocumented students.”

While studies have explored the types of possible and feared selves Latinx youth report, less is known about the specificity of their strategies or about balance among hoped-for and feared selves. To our knowledge, only two studies have examined these possible selves characteristics in Latinx youth samples (Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002). In both studies, Latinx youth reported few balanced possible selves (Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002). Yowell (2000) found gender differences in the strategies reported by Mexican-American and Puerto Rican-American youth. Specifically, when asked to report strategies for obtaining their occupational hoped-for possible selves, boys reported more specific strategies than girls. Yowell (2002) also explored the specificity of Mexican American students’ possible selves (e.g., the detail with which they described their future selves) and strategies (e.g., concreteness of strategies). Yowell (2002) found that the specificity of Mexican American students’ feared selves was significantly greater than both their hoped-for and expected selves. This suggests that youth conceptualize their hoped-for, expected, and feared selves differently. With respect to strategy specificity, Yowell (2002) found that while youth were able to describe their feared possible selves in great detail,
the strategies youth reported to avoid their feared and hoped-for possible selves were vague (e.g., work hard). In this study, strategies to obtain hoped-for achievement selves often emphasized themes consistent with the “American Dream.”

**Immigration/generational status.** Latinx refers to a youth’s ethnic group, not their nationality or country of birth (Salinas & Lozano, 2019). Thus, Latinx youth can differ with respect to their immigration/generational (e.g., immigrant/first-generation, US-born/second generation) and citizenship status. Only two studies have explored within-group differences based on Latinx youth’s immigration status. Yowell (2002) found that first generation Latinx youth (child and parent(s) born outside of the U.S.) held significantly higher hoped-for and expected educational selves (e.g., college graduate versus high school graduate) than second-(child born in the U.S. and at least one parent born in outside of U.S.) and third- generation youth (child and parent born in the U.S.). Halfond, Corona, and Moon (2012) found that immigrant adolescents were just as likely to express achievement-related hopes as U.S.-born adolescents. While past research has explored the achievement possible selves of Latinx youth of different generational statuses, to our knowledge, the relationship between immigrant status and non-achievement possible selves, balance, and strategy specificity has not been explored.

**Cultural orientations.** Immigrating to the U.S. in childhood or adolescence exposes youth to a unique combination of stressors (e.g., acculturation, discrimination) at a very critical developmental period (i.e. identity development). Acculturation is defined as the process that occurs when two cultures come into contact, which results in changes in behaviors, language, and values of individuals in both cultures (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002). For some time, acculturation was viewed as a linear relationship that resulted in a zero-sum, such that participation and identification with the dominant culture resulted in decreased participation and
identification with the culture of origin (Cabassa, 2003). However, current literature supports a bidirectional model of acculturation given that individuals can hold multiple cultural orientations (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). For instance, Latinx youth can be strongly oriented toward their culture of origin and the new culture.

A recent content analysis of the empirical research on acculturation (Makarova & Birman, 2015) highlighted the complex relationship between acculturation and academic outcomes. While some studies report that assimilative attitudes may be advantageous for students’ academic achievement (e.g., decreased risk of drop out, higher GPA), a bi-cultural orientation is positively associated with school adjustment, and students’ involvement in their own ethnic culture is related to psychological well-being. Despite these robust findings, another gap in the possible selves literature is an exploration of how cultural orientations (i.e., orientation to Anglo culture and orientation to Latinx culture) are related to youth’s possible selves and their associated characteristics (e.g., strategies, balance).

**Latinx youths’ possible selves and outcomes.** Only one study has examined whether possible selves predict youth outcomes in a Latinx sample and that study was focused on academic outcomes. Specifically, Yowell (2002) found that educational feared selves of Latinx ninth graders predicted risk of dropping out of school. Specifically, the more students feared low educational outcomes (e.g., giving up on school), the more likely they were to actually be at risk of dropping out of school.

**Re-conceptualizing balance from a cultural perspective.** While balance has been identified as an important possible selves characteristic that is related to outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006), the current conceptualization of balance may not capture the cultural nuance of the messages Latinx youth receive. Using the traditional coding of balance
(Oyserman, 2004), when youth report a hoped-for or expected possible self of “graduate high school” paired with a feared self of “getting pregnant,” those possible selves are coded in different domains (academic and risky/non-normative, respectively) and as unbalanced. Given that Latina mothers share messages about avoiding negative peer influence and avoiding or delaying dating, sex, and pregnancy when promoting education values (Romo, Kouyoumdjian, Nadeem, & Sigman, 2006), the traditional conceptualization of balance may not fully capture behaviors that may motivate Latinx youth’s health behaviors. Yowell (2000) posited that balance between global personal fears and academic hoped-for selves might be important when Latinx students perceive education as a form of gatekeeping rather than an opportunity to learn. In this instance, rather than fearing failing a course, students might fear a larger personal obstacle that would prevent them from completing schooling. As such, in the current study, feared selves related to risky behaviors (i.e. drug use, early pregnancy) were conceptualized as indirectly related to academic goals.

**Current Study**

The literature on the possible selves of Latinx youth is surprisingly limited in comparison to other youth. In our review of the literature, we identified three gaps that will be addressed in the current study. First, while some studies have explored the content of Latinx youth’s possible selves (Halfond et al., 2012, Yowell, 2000), only two studies have described the strategies associated with possible selves (including strategy specificity) or examined balance (Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002). Second, possible selves are socially constructed, yet only two studies have explored the relationship between contextual factors (e.g., immigration status) and Latinx youth’s possible selves (Halfond et al., 2012; Yowell, 2002). No studies have explored whether cultural orientations are associated with Latinx youth’s possible selves. Third, only one study has
explored the association between possible selves and Latinx youth educational outcomes (Yowell, 2002). No studies have explored the relation between possible selves and other Latinx youth outcomes. Finally, this study will explore whether a modified conceptualization of balance and traditionally-coded balance (Oyserman, 2004) differentially relate to Latinx youth outcomes.

**Study Aims and Hypotheses**

**Aim 1.**

The first aim of the current study was to describe Latinx youths’ hoped-for and feared possible selves and their associated characteristics (i.e., frequency and dispersion, strategy specificity, balance, total number of possible selves).

**Hypothesis 1.** We hypothesize that the most prevalent hoped-for selves will be in the achievement domain and the most prevalent feared selves will be in the risky behavior domain. Moreover, we hypothesize that youth will report more hoped-for possible selves than feared possible selves and that there will be more dispersion within the feared self domains than the hoped-for domains.

**Hypothesis 2.** We hypothesize that the strategies reported to achieve or avoid hoped-for and feared selves will receive low specificity ratings. To obtain a more nuanced picture of these strategies, we reviewed the strategies reported to identify common responses.

**Hypothesis 3.** Using Oyserman’s (2004) original conceptualization of balance, we hypothesize that Latinx youth will have low rates of balance between their possible and feared selves. We hypothesize that rates of balance will increase when the definition of balance is modified such that achievement hoped-for possible selves reported along with feared selves including “risky behaviors with life-altering consequences” are conceptualized as balanced.

**Aim 2.**
The second aim of the present study was to explore the associations between contextual factors and Latinx youth’s hoped-for and feared selves. Analyses in Aim 2 were conducted on the three most prevalent possible and feared selves identified in Aim 1. Hypotheses are provided based on prior findings; however, because prior work is limited on how possible selves balance and strategy specificity are associated with youth characteristics, some analyses were exploratory so no hypotheses are provided.

**Hypothesis 4.** Based on prior literature (Knox et al., 2000; Yowell, 2000), we hypothesize that youth’s sex will not be significantly related to the total number of possible selves they report. However, males will report more occupational hoped-for possible selves than females and females will report more interpersonal feared possible selves than males. Moreover, we hypothesize that males will report higher levels of specificity for their strategies than females. We explored the relationship between sex and balance.

**Hypothesis 5.** While Stoddard and colleagues (2016) found that hopes for occupational selves and fears for non-normative and delinquent behaviors decreased over time in a large sample of middle schoolers in the Midwest, we hypothesize the opposite will be true within this sample. Messaging about expectations of youth contributing to the family and instilling the importance of education through fears of risky behaviors with life-altering consequences will result in older youth reporting more occupational selves and risky feared selves. We also explored differences between grade levels in strategy specificity and balance.

**Hypothesis 6.** Similar to past findings (Halfond et al., 2012), we hypothesize that youth who immigrated to the U.S. and youth born in the U.S. will report a similar number of achievement (e.g., academic, occupational) hoped-for possible selves. However, based on past findings that first generation youth held significantly higher hoped-for educational selves than
second- and third- generation youth (Yowell, 2002), we hypothesize that youth who immigrated to the U.S. will report more educational hoped-for selves than youth born in the U.S. We explored the relationships between immigration status and strategy specificity and possible selves balance.

**Hypothesis 7.** To our knowledge, no research has explored the relationship between possible selves and Latinx youth’s cultural orientations (i.e., Latinx and Anglo orientation). As such, these analyses were exploratory and no hypotheses are presented.

**Aim 3.**

The third aim was to examine the association between possible selves and Latinx youth’s beliefs about education and sexual risk behaviors.

**Hypothesis 8.** We hypothesize that youth who report more hoped-for possible selves, more balance, and more specific strategies will report higher beliefs about education and less sexual risk behavior, after controlling for demographic variables, than youth with fewer hoped-for possible selves, less balanced possible selves, and who have less specific strategies.

**Method**

**Participants**

One hundred and fifty Latinx youth completed an anonymous survey in English or Spanish based on their preferred language. Eligibility criteria included reporting a valid birthday; being enrolled in middle, high school, or GED programs; self-identifying as Latinx; and, providing assent and having a parent or guardian consent to the youth participating. Data from eighteen youth were excluded because they (a) did not report a birthdate or reported an invalid birth year (i.e., within a month of the test date) \( n = 6 \); (c) were not currently in school or a GED program \( n = 5 \); (d) were enrolled in college \( n = 3 \); and (e) did not self-identify as Latinx \( n = \)
Accordingly, the analytic sample consisted of 132 youth. Participants’ mean age was 15.77 years ($SD = 1.69$), 59% identified as female and 41% identified as male. Nearly three-fourths (74%) of youth completed the survey in English and 26% completed the survey in Spanish. Thirty percent of youth were in middle school, while 70% were in high school or GED programs. Within this sample, 36% of youth were born in the U.S. and 64% were born outside of the U.S. Youth who immigrated to the U.S. had lived in the U.S. for an average of 7.00 years ($SD = 3.71$ years; range <1 year to 15 years). Ninety-four percent of all youth had at least one parent who was born outside of the U.S. Table 1 presents the additional sample characteristics.

Table 1.

**Participant Demographics**

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<td>15.54 (1.69)</td>
<td>16.08 (1.66)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>98 (74)</td>
<td>50 (61)</td>
<td>38 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>34 (26)</td>
<td>18 (53)</td>
<td>16 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>40 (30)</td>
<td>26 (65)</td>
<td>14 (35)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School/GED program</td>
<td>92 (70)</td>
<td>52 (57)</td>
<td>40 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth’s Country of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
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<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>6 (4)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>8 (6)</td>
<td>7 (9)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
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<td>4 (7)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>10 (8)</td>
<td>7 (9)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Country of Birth</td>
<td>8 (6)</td>
<td>4 (50)</td>
<td>4 (50)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father’s Country of Birth</td>
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<td>2 (25)</td>
<td>6 (75)</td>
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<td>Not reported</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedure**

After acquiring Institutional Review Board approval, participants were recruited in a state located in the Southeast region of the U.S. Recruitment was made possible with the help of community partners (e.g., government multicultural office, local churches) and through flyer distributions. Flyers containing study information and contact information were posted in local businesses (e.g., grocery stores, restaurants), in apartment complexes located in areas with a high population of Latinx, and at a local community event. Enrolled participants also offered to share study flyers with friends and acquaintances.

Interested participants were given the contact information of a bilingual project coordinator to learn more about the study and schedule an appointment to complete the study measures. Prior to obtaining consent or assent or scheduling the appointment, the coordinator described the study procedures to the families and potential participants were offered the opportunity to ask any questions. After youth assented and parents consented to their child’s participation youth were given an anonymous survey to complete.

Participants were given the option of completing the survey in either English or Spanish. Existing Spanish versions of measures were used when available. Measures not available in
Spanish were translated from English to Spanish using a team back-translation and forward-translation approach to maintain construct and conceptual equivalence (Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009; Sireci, Yang, Harter, & Ehrlich, 2006). Study material was initially translated from English to Spanish by the bilingual project coordinator. Next, two bilingual research assistants independently back-translated the study material into English and discrepancies were discussed with a third translator and a final determination was made. Youth were given the option to complete the survey in their homes, community centers, or a location of their choice. The bilingual project coordinator was available to answer youth’s and parents’ questions. Youth were given $20 for completing this one-time paper-pencil survey. No data was collected from parents.

**Measures**

**Demographic information.** Youth were asked to report their birthdate, grade, sex, where they were born, and where their parents were born.

**Grade level.** Youth were coded into two grade level groups: middle school (6th-8th grades) and high school (9th-12th grades) /GED programs (30% and 70%, respectively).

**Possible selves.** Possible selves were reported using a similar open-ended format as has been used in past studies (Oyserman, 2004). Participants could list as many possible selves as they wanted (see Appendix A for the PS questions). Specifically, youth were asked, “What do you hope to be like in the next five years?” (hoped-for possible selves); “What do you need to do to be this in the five years?” (hoped-for possible selves strategies); “What are some things you are concerned about or things you want to avoid being like in the future?” (feared possible selves); and, “What might help you avoid becoming like this in the future?” (feared possible selves strategies).
Cultural orientations. The Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) was used to measure Latinx youth’s cultural orientations. Similar to prior work (Arredondo et al., 2006; Torres, Driscoll, & Voell, 2012), the term Mexican was replaced with Latino to ensure that items would be applicable to youth from diverse Latinx backgrounds. The ARSMA-II is comprised of 12 items that assess both Latinx (6 items) and Anglo (6 items) Orientations. Example items include: “I enjoy reading books in Spanish” (Latinx Orientation) and “I associate with Anglos” (Anglo Orientation). Responses were recorded on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being Not at All and 5 being Almost Always. Latinx Orientation and Anglo Orientation scores were computed by calculating the average of the six items in each subscale, a ‘half rule’ was utilized (i.e., more than half of the items in a subscale needed to be completed to compute a score). Higher scores represent higher levels of association with each orientation. Cronbach’s alphas were .86 and .73 for the Latinx and Anglo orientation subscales.

Beliefs about education. Youth’s beliefs about education was assessed using five items that tap into youth’s perceptions of the future value of school (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005). Items include: “Going to college is necessary for what I want to do in the future,” “Doing well in school is the best way for me to succeed as an adult,” “I need to get good grades in school in order to get a good job as an adult,” “It is important to do well in school to earn a good living as an adult,” and “Doing well in school is the best way for me to get ahead in life.” Responses were recorded on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being Not at All True for Me and 5 being Very True for Me. A mean beliefs about education score was computed while using the ‘half rule.’ Higher scores represent higher beliefs about education. Within this sample, the total scale displayed excellent reliability (α = 0.94).

Sexual risk behavior. Participants’ answered five items from the Youth Risk Behavior
Surveillance Survey to measure their engagement in sexual risk behaviors (YRBS; CDC, 2018b): (a) age of first intercourse, (b) number of sexual partners in their lifetime; (c) number of sexual partners over the past three months, (d) use of drugs or alcohol at last intercourse, and (e) use of condoms at last intercourse. Responses options included yes or no, or item specific descriptive options with a range of options (e.g., select number of sexual partners from a list). Each question that was answered positively for sexual risk behavior (e.g., not using condoms or using alcohol/drugs before last intercourse, multiple partners) were scored one point and scores were summed. Higher scores represent engagement in more sexual risk behaviors (see Jeltova, Fish, M., & Revenson, 2005; Timmermans, van Lier, Koot, 2007 for similar methodology). Within this sample, the sexual risk behavior score displayed good reliability (α = 0.85).

**Possible Selves Coding**

**Domains.** Possible selves were coded using the scheme developed by Oyserman (2004), which included six domains: (1) *Achievement*- relates to school and school interactions with teachers, achievement-related activities; (2) *Interpersonal Relationships*- involves family, friends, relationships, and social interactions except with teachers; (3) *Personality Traits*- relates to personality characteristics, self-descriptions of traits; (4) *Physical/Health-Related*- relates to physical health, weight, height; (5) *Material/Lifestyles*- relates to material possessions and living situation, including moving; (6) *Negative*- includes all negatively worded responses (in feared selves, this relates to risky/non-normative behaviors). Additional domains that have been found in prior work and that may be relevant for Latinx youth were added to the Oyserman coding, including: (7) *Cultural Roots*- relates to ethnic socialization, learning about and being proud of one’s cultural roots, learning Spanish or the ethnic groups’ language, and not losing one’s ethnic identity; (8) *Religiosity*- relates to maintaining and/or strengthening relationship with God; (9)
Citizenship/Immigration Status relates to obtaining a green card or United States citizenship.

Achievement hoped-for possible selves were further coded into two subcategories: education (e.g., “go to college,” “studying”) and occupational (e.g., “have a good job,” “work as DJ”). Youth who reported both educational and occupational possible selves (e.g., “finish high school and go to work” or “failing school and not finding job”) or educational paths specific to a career (e.g., “study to become a graphic designer”) were rated as having both educational and occupational achievement hoped-for possible selves. Similar to past work (Bi & Oyserman, 2015), the total number of hoped-for and feared possible selves was also calculated.

Strategy specificity. Strategy specificity was rated on a scale from zero to three, with higher scores representing more specific (e.g., concrete) strategies for obtaining their hoped-for selves and avoiding their feared selves. Items were scored as follows: (0) no possible self reported, no strategy reported, or a strategy that is not codable (e.g., IDK; same), (1) youth reported a “vague” strategy (e.g., work hard, be healthy), (2) youth stated at least one “general” element of a strategy to achieve the self (e.g., get good grades, eat healthy, make good friends), or (3) youth stated at least one “specific” element of a strategy to achieve the self (e.g., go to college, eat more vegetables, don't hang around people who use drugs). Strategies reported for hoped-for or feared possible selves outside of the youth’s control (i.e., immigration reform), were noted, but not included in analyses assessing specificity. Within the hoped-for possible selves domain, youth who did not report actionable strategies (e.g., support from parents) were coded as not having a strategy because the question asked youth “What do you need to do to…” (n = 2). Strategies that were rated as either “vague” or “general” were further examined to better understand Latinx youth’s strategies for obtaining or avoiding their possible selves.

Balance. Balance was coded in two ways. The first method of coding balance was based
on Oyserman’s coding system. Specifically, if an individual reported a hoped-for self in the interpersonal domain (2) and a feared self in the health domain (4), that individual’s response was coded as not balanced (0). However, if an individual reported a hoped-for self in the achievement domain (1) and a feared self in the achievement domain (1), that individual’s response was coded as balanced. The second method of coding balance extended the conceptualization of balance such that when a participant reported a possible self in the domain of achievement (1) and a feared self in the risky/non-normative domain (6) those responses were considered balanced. Total number of balanced selves, using both the original and modified coding schemes, were computed.

Following finalization of the coding scheme and coding training, two bilingual study staff members coded all open-ended possible selves independently. When coding was complete, the coders met to discuss all discrepancies until they agreed on how to code responses.

Data Analytic Plan

First, assumptions of normality, outliers, multicollinearity, were checked. Skewness and kurtosis variables were assessed to ensure they were less than ± 1. Any univariate outliers were analyzed to assess for errors in coding or data missingness. Assumptions of linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were assessed in each regression model. Means, standard deviations, and ranges for continuous demographic and criterion variables were calculated. For categorical demographic and criterion variables, percentages were computed.

To address Aim 1 frequencies and rank ordering were calculated to explore the prevalence of domains reported for hoped-for and feared possible selves. Frequencies were also examined to assess dispersion among the hoped-for and feared possible selves. Additionally, three paired samples t-tests were conducted to analyze mean differences in (1) the number of
hoped-for and feared possible selves reported (regardless of domain), (2) balance when using the traditional Oyserman coding scheme and the modified balance coding, and (3) between specificity for obtaining hoped-for selves and avoiding feared selves.

To address the hypotheses of Aim 2, independent samples t-tests, chi-square tests, and bivariate correlations were conducted. For each dichotomous independent variable (i.e., sex, grade group, immigration status), six independent samples t-tests were conducted with (1) number of hoped-for possible selves, (2) number of feared possible selves, (3) total balance using Oyserman coding, (4) total balance using modified coding, (5) specificity of strategies reported to obtain hoped-for possible selves, and (6) specificity of strategies reported to avoid feared possible selves as outcomes variables. Additionally, nine chi-square tests were conducted with each dichotomous independent variable (i.e., sex, grade level group, immigration status) in the row and dichotomous measures of (1) achievement hoped-for, (2) educational hoped-for, (3) occupational hoped-for, (4) physical/health hoped-for, (5) achievement feared, (6) physical/health feared, (7) negative/risky feared possible selves in the column. To test the hypothesis that reporting interpersonal feared possible selves may differ by sex, an additional chi-square was conducted. In order to explore the relationship between continuous independent variables (i.e., Latinx orientation, Anglo orientation) and continuous outcome variables, bivariate correlation coefficients were computed.

To assess Aim 3, regression analyses were conducted for each outcome separately. Multiple linear regression models were conducted to determine whether the variables of interest significantly predicted youth’s beliefs about education and sexual risk behaviors, after controlling for sex, age, Latinx orientation, and Anglo orientation. In both regressions, sex, age, Anglo orientation, and Latinx orientation were entered in the first step of the model. Next,
number of hoped-for possible selves, number of feared possible selves, total balance (Oyserman coding), total balance (modified coding), specificity of strategies to obtain hoped-for selves, specificity of strategies to avoid feared selves were added in the second step.
Results

Preliminary Analyses

Bivariate correlations were calculated to examine relationships between study variables and demographic variables (Table 2).

Demographic variables (i.e. sex, age) significantly or theoretically related to dependent variables were controlled for in the first step of regression analyses.

Table 2.

Correlations Between Independent and Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Sex</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age (Years)</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>3. Immigration Status</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Anglo Orientation</td>
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<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.318**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>5. Latinx Orientation</td>
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<td>0.123</td>
<td>-0.174*</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trad. Balance</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mod. Balance</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>-0.178*</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.638**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. NHFPS</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>-0.168</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.266**</td>
<td>0.294**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. NFPS</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>0.260**</td>
<td>0.420**</td>
<td>0.536**</td>
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<td>10. HFSSS</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.251**</td>
<td>0.422**</td>
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<td>0.441**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>11. FSSS</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>0.223*</td>
<td>0.415**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.349**</td>
<td>0.406**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. BAE</td>
<td>-.248**</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.247**</td>
<td>.193*</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.206*</td>
<td>.311**</td>
<td>.327**</td>
<td>.352**</td>
<td>.309**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sex Risk Behavior</td>
<td>.258**</td>
<td>.346**</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>-.310**</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. Sex coded (1) Female, (2) Male. Immigration status coded (0) Born outside of US, (1) Born in the US. Trad. Balance = Traditional balance coding. Mod. Balance = Modified balance coding. NHFPS = Number of hoped-for possible selves. NFPS = Number of feared possible selves. HFSSS = Hoped-for self strategy specificity. FSSS = Feared self strategy specificity. BAE = beliefs about education.
Prior to conducting analyses, assumptions of univariate and multivariate normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were tested. Normality of data was evaluated by assessing skewness and kurtosis values and standardized z-score. Data was evaluated for missingness. Latinx orientation and Anglo orientation met assumptions of univariate normality. The skewness and kurtosis values for the beliefs about education measure were -1.63 and 1.68, respectively, and 1.60 and 1.42, respectively, for the Sexual risk behavior scale. Given that linear regression analyses do not assume normality for either the predictor variables or dependent variables (Kim, 2015) and data transformations can alter the hypotheses and constructs being measured (Field, 2013), increasing robustness within models is often recommended over data transformation. As such, bootstrapping with a sample of 2,000 was used to obtain a more accurate estimation of the sampling distribution.

Z-scores were calculated to assess for univariate outliers. One participant was detected as an outlier for Anglo orientation (z-score = -3.46), Latinx orientation (z-score = -3.06), and beliefs about education (z-score = -3.16). Upon further inspection, the majority of this participant’s responses were ‘1,’ regardless of question stem or answer option. This participant was, therefore, not included in our analyses. An additional participant was found to have left the majority of items, across all measures, blank. Therefore, they were also removed from the analytic sample. All remaining data points for beliefs about education, Latinx orientation, Anglo orientation, and sexual risk behaviors were retained for analyses given the robustness of the tests conducted and bootstrapping methods utilized. Therefore, the primary analytic sample was adjusted and consisted of 130 youth. Assumptions for linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity, were evaluated in each regression model.

**Aim 1 Analyses**
**Frequency and variability.** To explore our first two hypotheses, frequencies and rank ordering were calculated to assess the prevalence of hoped-for and feared possible self domains (Table 3). The three most frequently reported hoped-for possible self domains were: achievement (65%), physical/health related (19%), and personality traits (9%). The three most frequently reported feared possible self domains were: negative/risky/non-normative (32%), achievement (21%), and physical/health related (20%).

Table 3.

*Prevalence of Hoped-for and Feared Possible Selves by Domain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Hoped-for n (%)</th>
<th>Feared n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>84 (65)</td>
<td>27 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>49 (38)</td>
<td>14 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>56 (43)</td>
<td>14 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
<td>13 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>12 (9)</td>
<td>11 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Health</td>
<td>25 (19)</td>
<td>26 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material/Lifestyle</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative/Non-normative/Risky</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>42 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Roots</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship/Immigration</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A paired samples t-test was conducted to explore differences in the total number of hoped-for and feared possible selves reported by youth. It was posited that youth would report more hoped-for possible selves than feared possible selves. Results indicated that youth reported more hoped-for possible selves ($M = 1.64, SD = 1.13$) than feared possible selves ($M = 1.40, SD = 1.05$), $t(123) = 2.48, p = 0.015$. To examine the dispersion of domains among the hoped-for and feared possible selves, rank order and cumulative percentages were examined. Findings supported the hypothesis that youth reported more dispersion within the feared self domains.
compared to the hoped-for possible self domains (Figure 1). Ninety-three percent of hoped-for selves compared to 73% of feared selves responses were captured by the three most prevalent domains.

Figure 1.

Dispersion of Possible Selves Domains Reported by Youth

| Strategies and specificity. | While some youth reported specific strategies, the majority reported “general” or “vague” strategies (Table 4). Results did not support the hypothesis that strategies to avoid feared selves would be more specific than strategies to obtain hoped-for selves. Strategies for obtaining hoped-for selves were, on average, rated with more specificity than strategies for avoiding feared selves. |
| --- |

Table 4.

**Possible Self Strategy Specificity Coding by Possible Self Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy specificity rating</th>
<th>Hoped-for PSS $(n = 126)$</th>
<th>Feared PSS $(n = 108)$</th>
<th>$t$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD) or n (%)</td>
<td>Mean (SD) or n (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Health</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material/Lifestyle</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative/Risky</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>2%0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
To further understand the “vague” and “general” strategies reported by youth, individual responses were reviewed. Seventy-six percent ($n = 64$) of youth who reported achievement hoped-for possible selves earned “vague” or “general” strategy ratings. Of those youth, 24% were able to identify the need to “study hard,” 14% noted the importance of getting “good grades,” and 14% listed “go to college” as a way to achieve their goals. However, these youth did not note specific elements of how they would study, raise their grades, or get to college. Furthermore, 22% of youth shared strategies related to putting in effort or “working hard.” For example, 15-year-old Daniella wrote, “Echarle demasiadas ganas, estudiar mucho (Try my very best, study a lot)” and 13-year-old Grace wrote, “study and work hard, behave and work work work.” Moreover, 11% of youth reported strategies related to behavioral expectations. For example, 16-year-old Nina wrote, “Bueno estudiar mucho y no andar [haciendo] cosas [que] no debo [de] hacer (Well, study hard and do not go around doing things that I should not do)” and 13-year-old Juliet wrote, “I need to study a lot and not [play] around.”

Seventy-nine percent ($n = 33$) of the youth who reported feared risky possible selves earned “vague” or “general” strategy ratings. Of those 33, 33% reported strategies related to choosing the “right” path or friends and 18% reported strategies related to avoiding “bad” or “wrong” people. For example, 16-year-old David wrote, “No juntarme con personas equivocadas y tratar de ir por el camino correcto (Do not hang out with wrong people and try to go the right way)” and 17-year-old Angelina wrote, “Don’t mess with bad people.” While they conveyed an
understanding of the need to choose between people and paths, they did not identify what constituted a “good” or “bad” group or path. Moreover, 21% of these youth were able to identify the need for outside support (i.e., God, parents, psychologist), but did not describe what these outside supports could help them do to avoid becoming their feared possible selves.

**Balance.** To explore differences in balance when using the traditional Oyserman coding versus the modified coding, frequencies and a paired sample t-tested were computed. As hypothesized, youth earned lower ratings of balance when using the traditional Oyserman coding scheme. When using Oyserman’s coding, 29% of youth’s possible selves were rated as balanced. Conversely, when using the modified coding, 55% of youth’s possible selves were rated as balanced. A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate differences in the balance reported when using the traditional Oyserman coding scheme and the balance reported using a modified coding. Results indicated a significant increase in balance when using the modified balance coding scheme ($M = 0.56, SD = 0.53$) over the original Oyserman coding scheme ($M = 0.31, SD = 0.50$), $t(129) = -6.63, p < 0.001$.

**Aim 2 Analyses**

**Sex differences.** Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between sex and total number of possible selves reported, balance, and strategy specificity (Table 5). Findings did not indicate a significant difference in the number of possible selves reported, balance, or strategy specificity ($p > 0.05$). Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationship between sex and possible selves content. Both male and female youth expressed achievement hoped-for selves, however, females were more likely to report education hoped-for selves than males, $x^2(1, N = 130) = 6.60, p = 0.010$. Additionally, males were more likely to report feared selves in the occupational domain than females, $x^2(1, N =$
130) = 6.11, \( p = 0.013 \). Moreover, females were more likely than males to report feared possible selves in the physical/health related domain, \( \chi^2(1, N = 130) = 8.67, p = 0.003 \). No additional sex differences in possible selves content were observed.

Table 5.

Possible Selves Content and Characteristics by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS Characteristics</th>
<th>Females ((n = 77))</th>
<th>Males ((n = 53))</th>
<th>( t )-value</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of HFPS</td>
<td>1.64 (1.05)</td>
<td>1.60 (1.23)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FPS</td>
<td>1.51 (1.07)</td>
<td>1.25 (1.02)</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Oyserman)</td>
<td>0.31 (0.52)</td>
<td>0.31 (0.46)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Modified)</td>
<td>0.58 (0.55)</td>
<td>0.53 (0.50)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.64 (0.90)</td>
<td>1.38 (1.08)</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.32 (1.05)</td>
<td>1.12 (1.02)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement HFPS</td>
<td>51 (66)</td>
<td>33 (62)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational HFPS</td>
<td>36 (47)</td>
<td>13 (25)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational HFPS</td>
<td>30 (39)</td>
<td>26 (49)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical HFPS</td>
<td>13 (17)</td>
<td>12 (23)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement FPS</td>
<td>13 (17)</td>
<td>14 (26)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational FPS</td>
<td>8 (10)</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational FPS</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>10 (19)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal FPS</td>
<td>8 (10)</td>
<td>5 (9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical FPS</td>
<td>22 (29)</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky FPS</td>
<td>24 (31)</td>
<td>18 (34)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. **\( p < 0.01 \), * \( p < 0.05 \). HFPS = hoped-for possible self, FPS = feared possible self, HFPSS = hoped-for possible self strategy, FPSS = feared possible self strategy

Grade group differences. In order to explore the relationship between grade group and possible selves content and characteristics, means, independent samples t-tests, and chi-square tests were conducted (Table 6). Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between grade group and number of possible selves reported, balance, and strategy specificity. Results indicated that youth in middle school reported less balance (Oyserman) than
youth in high school/GED programs ($M_{diff} = -0.18, t(96.29) = -2.20, p = 0.030$, Welsh and Brown-Forsythe adjusted degrees of freedom). Findings did not indicate significant relationships between grade group and number of possible selves reported, culturally-modified balance, or specificity rating for strategies reported ($p > 0.05$).

Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationship between grade group and possible selves content. Grade group differences were found in youth’s possible selves content. Youth in both grade groups reported achievement possible selves, but youth in high school/GED programs were more likely than youth in middle school to report achievement and occupational hoped-for selves ($\chi^2[1, N = 130] = 6.16, p = 0.013$ and $\chi^2[1, N = 130] = 6.91, p = 0.009$, respectively), and achievement and occupational feared selves ($\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 5.79, p = 0.016$ and $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 6.72, p = 0.010$, respectively). Results did not indicate additional grade group differences in possible selves content.

Table 6.

Possible Selves Content and Characteristics by Grade Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS Characteristics</th>
<th>Middle School $\bar{n} = 39$</th>
<th>High School $\bar{n} = 91$</th>
<th>$t$-value</th>
<th>$\chi^2$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of HFPS</td>
<td>1.44 (0.91)</td>
<td>1.70 (1.12)</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FPS</td>
<td>1.30 (1.18)</td>
<td>1.45 (1.00)</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Oyserman)</td>
<td>0.18 (0.39)</td>
<td>0.36 (0.53)</td>
<td>-2.20*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Modified)</td>
<td>0.46 (0.51)</td>
<td>0.60 (0.53)</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.33 (0.98)</td>
<td>1.62 (0.97)</td>
<td>-1.51</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.00 (1.10)</td>
<td>1.34 (1.00)</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement HFPS</td>
<td>19 (49)</td>
<td>65 (71)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational HFPS</td>
<td>12 (31)</td>
<td>37 (41)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational HFPS</td>
<td>10 (26)</td>
<td>46 (51)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.91**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical HFPS</td>
<td>8 (21)</td>
<td>17 (19)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement FPS</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
<td>24 (26)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational FPS</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
<td>11 (12)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational FPS</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>14 (15)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.72*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical FPS  9 (23)  17 (19)  -  0.33
Risky FPS    16 (41)  26 (29)  -  1.94

Notes: **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. HFPS = hoped-for possible self, FPS = feared possible self, HFPSS = hoped-for possible self strategy, FPSS = feared possible self strategy

Immigration status differences. In order to explore the relationship between immigration status and possible selves content and characteristics, independent samples t-tests and chi-square tests were conducted (Table 7). Results indicated that youth born outside of the U.S. reported more modified balance than born in the U.S. ($M_{diff} = 0.20$, $t(128) = 2.05$, $p = 0.042$). Findings did not indicate significant relationships between immigration status and number of possible selves reported, original balance, or specificity of strategies reported for possible selves ($p > 0.05$). Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationship between immigration status and possible selves content. Youth born outside of the U.S. were more likely than youth born in the U.S. to report achievement feared selves, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 4.24$, $p = 0.039$). Results did not indicate additional differences in possible selves content ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7.

Possible Selves Content and Characteristics by Immigration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS Characteristics</th>
<th>Born Outside U.S. (n = 84)</th>
<th>Born in U.S. (n = 46)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>$\chi^2$- value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of HFPS</td>
<td>1.76 (1.19)</td>
<td>1.37 (0.95)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FPS</td>
<td>1.48 (0.99)</td>
<td>1.27 (1.15)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Oyserman)</td>
<td>0.35 (0.50)</td>
<td>0.24 (0.48)</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Modified)</td>
<td>0.63 (0.51)</td>
<td>0.43 (0.54)</td>
<td>2.05*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.54 (0.92)</td>
<td>1.52 (1.09)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPSS Specificity</td>
<td>1.27 (1.04)</td>
<td>1.17 (1.04)</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement HFPS</td>
<td>57 (68)</td>
<td>27 (59)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational HFPS</td>
<td>35 (42)</td>
<td>14 (30)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational HFPS</td>
<td>39 (46)</td>
<td>17 (37)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical HFPS 17 (20) 8 (17) - 0.16
Achievement FPS 22 (26) 5 (11) - 4.24*
Educational FPS 11 (13) 3 (7) - 1.34
Occupational FPS 11 (13) 3 (7) - 1.34
Physical FPS 20 (24) 6 (13) - 2.15
Risky FPS 29 (35) 13 (28) - 0.53

Notes. **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. HFPS = hoped-for possible self, FPS = feared possible self, HFPSS = hoped-for possible self strategy, FPSS = feared possible self strategy

**Cultural orientations.** In order to explore the relationship between cultural orientations and possible selves, bivariate correlation coefficients were computed (Table 8). Neither Latinx or Anglo orientation were significantly correlated with any continuous possible selves characteristics (i.e., number of possible selves, number of feared selves, balance, strategy specificity).

Table 8.

**Correlations Between Cultural Orientations and Possible Selves Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of HFPS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of FPS</td>
<td>.536**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Balance (Oyserman)</td>
<td>.266**</td>
<td>.260**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Balance (Modified)</td>
<td>.291**</td>
<td>.420**</td>
<td>.638**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. HFPSS Specificity</td>
<td>.317**</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.251**</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. FPSS Specificity</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>.349**</td>
<td>.223*</td>
<td>.415**</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Latinx Orientation</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Anglo Orientation</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. HFPS = hoped-for possible self, FPS = feared possible self, HFPSS = hoped-for possible self strategy, FPSS = feared possible self strategy

**Aim 3 Analyses**

Two hierarchical multiple linear regression models were conducted to assess Aim 3. One with beliefs about education as the outcome variable and one with sexual risk behaviors as the outcome variable. Sex, age, Anglo orientation, and Latinx orientation scores were entered in Step
To examine the relationship between possible selves characteristics and youth’s beliefs about education, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted (Table 9). When sex, age, Anglo and Latinx orientation were entered into the model, they significantly predicted youth’s beliefs about education, $F(4, 115) = 5.56, p = 0.000$. When number of hoped-for possible selves, number of feared possible selves, original balance (Oyserman), modified balance, hoped-for possible selves strategy specificity, and feared possible selves strategy specificity were added to the model, they significantly improved the model. All variables taken together significantly predicted youth reported beliefs about education, $F(10, 109) = 5.94, p = 0.000$. Sex, Anglo orientation, total number of hoped-for possible selves, and Oyserman balance significantly predicted youth’s beliefs about education.

Table 9.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Balance as a Predictor of Beliefs about Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-2.77</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx Orientation</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Orientation</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex*</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-2.28</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx Orientation</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Orientation**</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of HFPS*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FPS</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Oyserman)</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-2.04</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Modified)</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFPSS Specificity</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPSS Specificity</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.5-</td>
<td>0.155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes. **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. \( R^2 \) in step 1 = 0.162; \( R^2 \) in step 2 = 0.353; \( \Delta R^2 = .191, \Delta F(6, 109) = 5.36, p = 0.000. \)

To examine the relationship between possible selves characteristics and youth’s sexual risk behaviors, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted (Table 10). When sex, age, Anglo and Latinx orientation were entered into the model, they significantly predicted youth’s sexual risk behaviors, \( F(4, 115) = 10.37, p = 0.000. \) When number of hoped-for possible selves, number of feared possible selves, original balance (Oyserman), modified balance, hoped-for possible selves strategy specificity, and feared possible selves strategy specificity were added to the model, they did not significantly improve the model. All variables taken together significantly predicted youth reported sexual risk behaviors, \( F(10, 109) = 4.40, p = 0.000. \) Sex, age, and Anglo orientation significantly predicted youth’s sexual risk behaviors.

Table 10.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Balance as a Predictor of Sexual Risk Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-0.97</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latinx Orientation</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anglo Orientation</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
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<td>1.09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
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Notes. **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. \( R^2 \) in step 1 = 0.27; \( R^2 \) in step 2 = 0.29; \( \Delta R^2 = 0.022, \Delta F(6, 109) = 0.57, p = 0.751 \)
Discussion

Previous research focused on the possible selves of Latinx youth is often limited in scope (i.e., achievement possible selves only) and has yet to explore differences in possible self characteristics (e.g., strategy specificity, balance) based on contextual factors. The aims of this study were to (1) identify Latinx youth’s hoped-for and feared possible selves, while exploring frequency, dispersion, strategy specificity, and balance, (2) evaluate the associations between contextual factors (i.e., sex, grade, cultural orientations, immigration status) and the possible selves of Latinx youth, and (3) examine the association between possible selves and Latinx youth’s beliefs about education and sexual risk behaviors.

The first aim of the current study was to describe Latinx youths’ hoped-for and feared selves and their associated characteristics (i.e., frequency, dispersion, strategy specificity, balance, total number of possible selves). Consistent with past findings (Yowell, 2000), when Latinx youth reported their possible selves in an open-ended format, youth reported more hoped-for possible selves than feared selves. Furthermore, similar to prior work (Halfond et al., 2012; Yowell, 2000) the most prevalent hoped-for and feared self domains reported by Latinx youth in this sample were in the achievement (65%) and risk (32%) domains and youth reported more variability in their feared than hoped for selves. While the majority of youth reported hoped-for selves in the achievement domain, many of those youth reported feared selves in other domains, such as risk behaviors (32%) and health (20%). This dispersion among feared selves is likely related to the low percentage of possible selves rated as “balanced” when using traditional coding.

When utilizing the traditional coding scheme for balance (Oyserman, 2004), only 29% of youth were rated as having “balanced” possible selves. Modifying balance coding to include an
achievement hoped-for possible self and feared risky self as a balanced pair increased the percentage of youth who obtained a balanced rating to 55%. Altering the balance coding was guided by past work that indicated that when promoting educational values, Latina mothers often share messages about avoiding negative peer influence and avoiding or delaying dating, sex, and pregnancy (Romo et al., 2006). This alteration is also in line with the finding that Latinx families tend to value the guidance that parents provide children to develop stronger morals, referred to as educación, (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2005) similarly to how they value education obtained at school (Viramontez Anguiano, Salinas, & Garcia, 2010, as cited in Arellanes, Anguiano, & Lohman, 2017).

While culturally-modified balance was not related to the outcomes assessed in the current study, these results shed light on the fact that 26% of Latinx youth in the current sample held a hoped-for self in an achievement domain and a feared self in a risk domain simultaneously. Given that educational fears are associated with increased risk of dropping out of school among Latinx youth (Yowell, 2002) and risk domain selves are often conceptualized as road blocks to achieving educational goals for Latinx families, it is important to further explore the relationship between modified balance and outcomes. Future studies should explore how modified balance relates to other educational outcomes such as grades, risk of dropping out of school, or class participation. This finding is also important to consider when tailoring education retention resources for Latinx youth. It may be important for interventions and informational material for Latinx youth to focus on enhancing youth’s self-efficacy and procedural knowledge related to navigating substance refusal or engaging in less risky sexual behaviors.

While most youth were able to report strategies for obtaining or avoiding future selves, many youth received ratings in the “vague” or “general” categories. Although youth identified
strategies, they often lacked concrete behavioral plans (e.g., study for the SAT, say ‘no’ to people who offer me substances). Many of the “vague” and “general” strategies reported for obtaining hoped-for achievement selves were consistent with rhetoric related to achieving the “American Dream,” as was found in past work (Yowell, 2002). These responses also align with parental messages related to Latinx youth working hard in school to access different opportunities than the ones afforded to their parents. Past work has demonstrated that Latinx parents often share messages such as, “Either work hard at school or work hard in the fields” (Lopez, 2001) or “Study so that [you] do not end up like me. I did not study and here I am working all the time, washing dishes” (Hill, Witherspoon, & Bartz, 2016). Similarly, “vague” and “general” strategies for avoiding feared selves centered around avoiding “bad” or “wrong” people and picking the “right” path or friends. These responses are in line with a common metaphor among Latinx parents of “following the good path of life” (el buen camino; Azmitia & Brown, 2002) and past findings that Latinx youth often report strategies related to avoidance when discussing feared selves (Halfond et al., 2012; Yowell, 2002).

Though many youth acknowledged the importance of working hard, getting good grades, studying hard, maintaining behavior, and going to college, they did not share further information about how they planned to study, improve grades, or get to college. These results suggest that Latinx youth may benefit from engaging in possible selves interventions geared toward helping increase strategy specificity (Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman et al., 2006). However, it is also important to note that the responses captured in the current study may not demonstrate the depth or breadth of the strategies and skills Latinx youth possess. Future studies should directly examine Latinx youth’s study skills and self-efficacy related to substance refusal and condom use to better understand the relationships between possible selves and strategies. This is
necessary given that “study hard” and “avoid bad people” are rated as “general,” but could involve many concrete steps that youth would take, but do not deem necessary to explicitly denote in a questionnaire.

Furthermore, assessing the quality of counseling services Latinx students receive through measures such as the College and Career Readiness Counseling Support Scales (Lapan, Poynton, Marcotte, Marland, & Milam, 2017) is critical given that past research has illustrated that Latinx parents often struggle with interacting with the educational system in the U.S. due to language barriers, lack of procedural knowledge, and unfamiliarity with advocating for children in school settings (Anguiano & Lopez, 2012; Hill et al., 2016). For example, in an ethnographic study (Anguiano & Lopez, 2012) a Latinx parent who immigrated to the US reported,

“When [our children] go to school, we can’t help them anymore because we don’t know [the system]. From that moment the gap between parents and children becomes wider. We don’t know how to guide them because there is another [educational] system here and another language; it is very difficult for us. We don’t know how to read the children books in English before going to bed. To motivate them is difficult because we don’t know how to do it.” (p. 331)

Because Latinx students must rely on gatekeepers in the education system (e.g., guidance counselors) to provide them with information their parents may not be able to, it is important to understand the counseling support Latinx youth receive. Although youths’ reported strategies are valuable information, to evaluate them in isolation is to neglect the understanding that there are disparities in educational resources available to Latinx youth; which inadvertently places onus on Latinx students in a manner that may be unjust and perpetuate stereotypes without examining the factors contributing to their apparent lack of procedural knowledge.
The second aim of the present study was to explore the associations between contextual factors and Latinx youth’s hoped-for and feared selves. Sex differences emerged with respect to content of possible selves reported. Consistent with past work (Knox et al., 2000; Yowell, 2000), females in the current study were more likely to report educational hoped-for possible selves than males, while males were more likely to report occupational feared selves than females. Prior work has established that while Latinx parents emphasize the importance of education to their children (Ceballo, 2004; Cross, Marchand, Medina, Villafuerte, & Rivas-Drake, 2019), the cultural value of familismo defines gender roles and expectations within Latinx families that in turn differentially affect educational trajectories for Latinx males and females (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Familismo emphasizes solidarity among family units, which often manifests itself as providing financial and emotional support for family, at times at the expense of an individual’s needs (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010). For Latinx females, education is often viewed as a tool to resist some of the oppressive aspects of Latinx gender roles (Cammarota, 2004). For young Latinx males, educational goals are often set aside in order to fulfill expectations regarding working to contribute to the family (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

With regard to strategy specificity, males and females did not differ in the ratings they earned as hypothesized. This hypothesis was based upon the past finding (Yowell, 2000) that when asked to report strategies to obtain their top occupational hoped-for self, males reported strategies with higher specificity than females. Given that females are often less likely to prioritize or report occupational hoped-for selves (Knox et al., 2000; Yowell, 2000), it is possible that females in that study (Yowell, 2000) were at the inherent disadvantage of not having considered or formulated strategies for selves not as salient to them. Of note, our study differs methodologically from Yowell’s (2000) work because our study did not restrict strategy...
specificity coding to a single domain. Furthermore, our sample differs from Yowell’s (2000) as their sample was compromised of U.S. born Latinx youth in 8th grade, all of whom were of Mexican or Puerto Rican descent. Thus, results of the current study indicate that, overall, male and female Latinx adolescents do not significantly differ in the specificity of the strategies they report.

Current findings did not support the hypothesis that prevalence of interpersonal feared selves would differ by sex. Only ten percent of females and nine percent of males in our sample reported interpersonal feared selves. Although inconsistent with past work, which found that females were more likely to report interpersonal feared selves than males (Anthis et al., 2004; Knox et al., 2000), this aligns with the prior finding that interpersonal feared selves (e.g., friendships) are infrequently reported by both Latinx males and females (Yowell, 2000). This lack of worry related to interpersonal relationships may be related to the cultural value of familismo, which emphasizes warm, close, supportive family relationships (Campos, Ullman, Aguilera, & Dunkel Schetter, 2014). Past findings have demonstrated that higher levels of familismo are related to greater perceived social support (Campos et al., 2014). It is possible that the social support Latinx youth feel from their family members allows them to worry less about other interpersonal relationships. This is supported by Yowell’s (2000) interview findings, which noted a theme labelled “insignificance of friendship.” With examples such as:

“You know, they’re just friends. I’m not just saying, they’re nobody; they’re close to me, you know. But we’re just friends. I can’t explain it . . . but they don’t have to go all out on me. I expect my family to do that, not my friends, ’cause they have their own family and stuff . . . you know, my mom always says that a friend is a dollar in a pocket. One day they’re here, and the other day they’re gone.” (p. 266)
Thus, it is possible that fear related to personal relationships (e.g., friendships) may not be as central or salient to Latinx youth due to the social support they feel from family. Future research, with a larger sample, should further investigate the potential protective role that familismo can serve for Latinx youth with regard to interpersonal feared selves during adolescence.

Exploratory analyses also indicated that females were more likely to report feared selves related to physical/health selves than males. Specifically, many females reported fears of becoming “fat” in the future. While obesity is a common health issue for Latinx youth (Isasi, Rastogi, & Molina, 2016), past work has indicated that Latina adolescents report greater body dissatisfaction than Latino adolescents (Ayala, Mickens, Galindo, & Elder, 2007). Moreover, in a prior study examining body image perceptions among Latinx youth diagnosed with obesity, Latinx females diagnosed with obesity reported significantly lower perceptions of their physical appearance than Latinx males diagnosed with obesity (Mizra, Mackey, Armstrong, Jaramillo, & Palmer (2011). Future work focusing on factors related to the health possible selves of Latinx youth is warranted given that Latinx youth develop obesity, asthma, depression, and alcohol use at high rates (Isasi et al., 2016) and little is known about how possible selves might relate to Latinx youth’s health behaviors.

Analyses of grade group differences were largely exploratory due to the limited number of studies that have analyzed differences in possible selves content across grade levels. It was posited that Latinx youth in high school/GED programs would report more feared occupational and risky feared selves than youth in middle school. While results indicated that youth in high school/GED programs were more likely than youth in middle school to report achievement and occupational hoped-for and feared selves, they were not more likely to report risky feared selves than youth in middle school. These hypotheses were based on past literature (Stoddard et al.,
which argued that the transitions between middle school, high school, and then beyond high school may represent symbolic shifts between childhood, into adolescence, and then into adulthood, respectively. Thus, the greater number of achievement and occupational hopes and fears reported by youth in high school/GED programs can be interpreted as developmentally appropriate given social changes among peers coupled with the cultural expectations for Latinx children to financially contribute to the family (Ayón et al., 2010).

The hypothesis that youth in high school/GED programs would report more feared risky selves was not supported. In the current sample, roughly 20% of youth in middle school and high school/GED programs reported feared selves in the risky domain. Due to the importance of educación and morals building (Espino, 2016), it is likely that Latinx youth begin receiving messages about the need to avoid negative peer influences at a young age. Moreover, given that Latinx relate avoiding negative peer influence with obtaining educational goals (Romo et al., 2006), they likely continue to hear these messages throughout their academic careers. Exploratory results also indicated that youth in high school/GED programs were more likely to report “balanced” possible selves when using traditional coding than youth in middle school. As described in Erikson’s (1968) model of psychosocial development, as youth age and go through the process of “trying on” different selves they begin to refine and decrease the number of selves they envision. As such, older youth reporting more balanced selves may be considered the normative process of youth narrowing down the hopes and fears they have to fewer domains.

With respect to differences by immigration status, analyses were also largely exploratory due to the lack of current research regarding the relationship between possible selves and immigration status. Though Yowell (2002) considered generational status when examining the relationship between Latinx students’ possible selves and risk for school drop-out and Gonzalez
and colleagues (2015) explored how perceptions of documentation status relate to possible futures, to our knowledge, differences in possible selves characteristics based on immigration status have not been explored quantitatively to date. Results supported the hypothesis that youth would report similar numbers of achievement hoped-for possible selves regardless of immigration status, as was observed in a prior qualitative study (Halfond et al., 2012). It was further hypothesized that youth who immigrated to the U.S. would report more educational hoped-for possible selves than youth born in the U.S. Although more youth born outside of the U.S. reported educational possible selves (42%) than youth born in the U.S. (30%), this difference was not significant.

Exploratory analyses indicated that youth born outside of the U.S. were more likely than youth born in the U.S. to report achievement feared selves. Given that many Latinx families immigrate to the U.S. with hopes of overcoming economic hardships (Arellanes et al., 2017), it is possible that the fear of not succeeding academically or occupationally is more salient to youth who immigrated to the U.S. than youth born in the U.S. Moreover, youth born outside of the U.S. reported more “balanced” possible selves than youth born in the U.S. when using the modified coding schemes. Prior work has demonstrated that Latinx immigrants often report daily stressors, such as community violence, peer issues, and family troubles (Patel, Barrera, Strambler, Muñoz & Macciomei, 2016). Given this community context, it is possible that Latinx immigrants are exposed to examples of risk domain selves more frequently and have additional examples of life altering decisions that could affect their ability to pursue educational or occupational hoped-for selves. Future work should explore how community context relates to the hopes and fears of Latinx youth.

The relationship between cultural orientations and possible selves characteristics (i.e.,
number, balance, specificity) was explored. Neither Latinx nor Anglo orientation were significantly correlated with any of the continuous possible selves characteristics examined in the current study (number of possible selves, balance, strategy specificity). Literature supports a bidirectional model of acculturation and has demonstrated its advantages over focusing on unidimensional models to predict outcomes; as such, a linear measure of acculturation was not used in our analyses as individuals can hold multiple cultural orientations (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). Recent literature has shifted towards assessing the dynamic process of cultural adaptation referred to as biculturalism (i.e., the degree to which individuals have internalized aspects of mainstream and ethnic culture) rather than assessing the degree to which individuals adapt to the mainstream culture (Basilio et al., 2014). While it has been proposed that biculturalism can be assessed using product score computations involving measures of involvement in multiple cultures, difference, sum, or product scores are often less reliable than the original scores and may enhance measurement error (Basilio et al., 2014). Future research should, therefore, explore the relationship between biculturalism to better understand how the process of cultural adaptation relates to Latinx youth’s possible selves.

Aim 3 explored the relationship between Latinx youth’s possible selves characteristics and outcomes. Results indicated that when controlling for sex, age, Latinx orientation, and Anglo orientation, the number of hoped-for possible selves reported by youth positively predicted youth’s beliefs about education while traditional balance negatively predicted youth’s beliefs about education. The finding that more hoped-for possible selves related to higher beliefs about education aligns with past findings that number of possible selves can positively predict academic outcomes (e.g., test scores, Bi & Oyserman, 2015) and number of achievement possible selves can positively predict teacher report of student participation (Oyserman et al.,
The finding that increased original balance predicts lower beliefs about education is surprising, but may be explained by considering that in order to have a “balanced” achievement self, youth must have both achievement hopes and fears. As demonstrated by Yowell (2002), Latinx youth reporting more educational feared selves predicted increased risk for dropping out of school. Thus, having feared selves in the achievement domain may not be positively self-regulating for Latinx youth. While modified balance did not predict youth’s beliefs about education, it is important for future studies to consider that traditional balance coding may not evoke self-regulation for Latinx youth. Moreover, it is important for future work to consider how modified balance may relate to other educational outcomes (e.g., GPA, test scores, participation).

The relationship between possible self characteristics and youth’s sexual risk behaviors was also evaluated. When controlling for sex, age, Latinx orientation, and Anglo orientation, none of the possible selves characteristics examined in the current study predicted youth’s sexual risk behaviors. An unexpected finding emerged that increased Anglo orientation was associated with decreased sexual risk behaviors in the current sample. Past research examining the association between cultural orientation and sexual risk behaviors among Latinx youth in Southern California found that cultural orientations varied in how they related to specific sexual risk behaviors (Becker et al., 2014). For example, while increased Anglo orientation was associated with greater likelihood of having had sexual intercourse and having concurrent partners, it was not associated with earlier age at first sexual encounter, not using a condom at most recent intercourse, or with using alcohol or drugs before last sexual encounter. Moreover, both Latinx and Anglo orientation were associated with lifetime number of partners. In the current study, we examined the association between possible selves characteristics and a composite score of sexual risk behavior rather than individual sexual risk behaviors. Moreover,
in the present study, having had sexual intercourse was not coded as a sexual risk behavior because it is possible to minimize risk during sexual activity. Additionally, while this past work (Becker et al., 2014) asked participants, “Do you have more than one current sexual partner?”, the current study asked participants how many sexual partners they have had in the last three months. While these methodological differences may have contributed to these discrepant findings, it is also possible that sample population differences contributed as well. While 77% of participants in Becker and colleagues’ (2014) sample identified as Mexican-American, only 26% of youth in the current sample were Mexican-American. Furthermore, as noted above, these findings highlight the importance of considering biculturalism as opposed to unidimensional measures of acculturation.

Limitations

While the current study has many strengths, there are also some limitations. With regard to sample limitations, although this study has a larger sample size than most studies exploring the possible selves of Latinx youth, our sample is still relatively small. As such, it is possible that relationships may not have been identified due to a lack of power and findings may not be representative of the sample population. Additionally, these findings may not generalize to non-Latinx youth or Latinx youth in other grade groups, from different countries of origin, residing in more established Latinx communities, or in other regions of the U.S.

With regard to methodological limitations, it is also important to consider that youth completed possible selves measures through a paper-pencil format as part of a longer questionnaire packet. Although youth could complete the surveys at their own pace, it is possible that some youth experienced fatigue and provided shorter answers than they would have if they completed less measures or responded in an interview format. Additionally, because youth could
report multiple selves and strategies on a single line (Appendix A), on occasion, it was difficult for coders to parse apart which strategies were connected to which selves. Furthermore, the survey stem for the hoped-for possible selves asked youth to reflect on what they “hoped to be like in 5 years,” while the feared possible selves stem asked youth to consider what they “wanted to avoid being like in the future.” The lack of consistency between the anchoring may have affected findings, given our understanding that individuals perceive near and distant futures differently (Wakslak, Nussbaum, Liberman, & Trope, 2008).

While we gathered a great deal of information from the youth, we did not have access to information that is known to be related to Latinx youth’s outcomes. For example, past work has identified that parental educational expectations are significantly related to Latinx youth’s beliefs about education (Rivas, Drake, & Marchand, 2016). Unfortunately, we did not collect information about parent’s expectations or the type of messaging youth received from their parents about education. Moreover, our ability to directly compare our findings to past work was limited by the outcomes measures we collected. Future work should consider including variables and outcomes assessed in previous work to allow for more direct comparison. Furthermore, understanding youth’s contexts and the resources available to them could help to better understand the selves and strategies they report.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations listed above, the current study adds considerably to our understanding of Latinx youth’s possible selves and contextual factors related to their hoped-for and feared-selves. Contextual and cultural factors should be considered when examining the possible selves of Latinx youth. Alterations to previous methodology were explored to better understand how culture may influence the hopes and fears of Latinx youth and provided
meaningful details to our understanding of Latinx youth’s possible selves. Utilizing the current results to inform resources and interventions for Latinx youth may help increase engagement and impact. Given the numerous disparities in Latinx youth’s health and educational outcomes, future works focused on exploring factors related to their outcomes are warranted and crucial for helping Latinx youth achieve their goals.
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doi:10.1207/S1532480XADS0602_2
Appendix A. Possible Selves Questionnaire

**Instructions:** Many people have in mind some things they want to be or do in the future, regardless of how likely it is that they will actually be that way or do those things. These are the kinds of selves that you would hope to be like. Please write your responses to the questions below.

1. What do you hope to be like in the next five years? __________________________
   a) What do you need to do to be this in the next five years? ____________________

   b) Are you currently doing anything to try to become this in the next five years?
      Please circle your response: Yes No

   c) What might keep you from being like this in the next five years? Or, what will make it harder to be like this in the next five years? ______________________________

   d) What can your parents do to help you become this in the next five years? ______

**Instructions:** We all have images or pictures of what we don’t want to be like – we all have images about what we don’t want to do or what we want to avoid being like in the future. Please write your responses to the questions below.

2. What are some things you are concerned about or things you want to avoid being like in the future? __________________________
   a) What might help you avoid becoming like this in the future? ____________________

   b) What might make it more likely that you become this in the future? ______________

   c) Are you currently doing anything to try to avoid becoming this in the next five years?
      Please circle your response: Yes No

   d) What can your parents do to help you avoid becoming like this in the next five years?
      ___________________________________________________
Vita

Stephanie Romo was born on August 16, 1992, in Hialeah, Florida. She graduated from Miami Springs Senior High School, Miami Springs, Florida in 2010. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from New York University, New York, New York in 2014 and subsequently worked for Shriners Hospitals for Children—Boston and Massachusetts General Hospital for three years before starting her graduate studies in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at Virginia Commonwealth University in August 2017.