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Variables Relevant to Self-Efficacy: Mexican-American High School Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

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VARIABLES RELEVANT TO SELF-EFFICACY: MEXICAN-AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to ascertain if a relationship exists between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and failed grade levels during school career among Mexican-American high school students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) residing along the southwestern state of the Mexican border. Moreover, to learn if a relationship exists between motivation and the above variables. This study also observed if a relationship between motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA existed; it also observed the correlation between self-efficacy and motivation among Mexican-American high school students with SLD. The findings of this study were not significant for self-efficacy, motivation, and demographics. Nonetheless, there was significance among several demographic factors. No significant relationship was found on subscales of motivation and GPA. However, there was a significant relationship between self-efficacy and motivation. This study used a sample of convenience; however, the results of this study may be significant to students with the same characteristics as the ones in this study. This study contributes to the limited literature that exists on Mexican-American high school students with SLD. Implications for this study include developing strategies on self-efficacy and motivation for students with SLD. It is recommended

that a manual for counselors working with students who have SLD be developed, field tested and validated. The significant findings among demographic factors may enhance counselors' and educators' understanding of Mexican-American students with SLD to improve their potential for a successful education, and life opportunities.

DEDICATION

First of all I want to give the honor and the glory to you My Lord Jesus Christ and Savior for having me complete my doctoral studies. You have been my rock and support giving me strength every single minute of my life. I also want to thank you my supportive family without you this chapter of my life would not have been possible. My husband Pedro Orlando Alaniz, my mother Irma Barrera Rosales, my daughters, Brianda Alejandra, Kathia Itzel, and Alaissa Camila, I have gratitude towards you for having been there supporting me, loving me, and being patient with me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is well documented in the psychoeducational literature that self-efficacy continues to be one of the most significant predictors of academic success among high school students across the U.S. (Bandura, 1986; Caprara, Vecchione, Alessandri, Gerbino, & Barbaranelli, 2011; Hwang & Lai, 2017; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Suldo & Shaffer, 2007; Wasserberg & Rottman, 2016; Yazici, Seyis, & Altun, 2011). In addition, motivation has a strong relationship with self-efficacy among students' academic performance (Jaafar, Awaludin, & Bakar, 2014). However, students with specific learning disabilities (SLDs) often have low self-efficacy and low motivation, and as such, are less likely to uphold the same academic expectations for themselves as students without SLDs.

According to the report from the National Center for Learning Disabilities (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014), 4.6 million (1.7%) individuals in the U.S. have SLDs. SLD has become the largest classification of identified students receiving special education services in public schools, with an estimated 2.4 million students (42% of students receiving special education) in public schools across the U.S. as classified under the Individuals with Learning Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2015; National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Students with SLD are often identified as having poor academic performance, low self-efficacy, and low motivation (deFur & Runnells, 2014; Jungert

& Anderson, 2013). This results in significant disadvantages for future academic and employment successes for many.

Low self-efficacy may not be the only problem that students with SLD are facing; students may also be struggling with low motivation (Adelman & Taylor, 1983, 1990). Motivation is defined as a behavior (Guay, et al., 2010) that moves an individual to perform an activity or not perform the activity (Gredler, Broussard, & Garrison, 2004). Motivation can be divided in two types: extrinsic and intrinsic (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991; Wery & Thomson, 2013). Extrinsic motivation is performing an action because it is valuable to achieve whereas intrinsic motivation is performing an action because it is interesting to achieve, rather than driven by external energy (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992). Intrinsic motivation is often connected to the achievement of students with SLD (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1994; Bouffard & Couture, 2003; Linnenbrink, 2005). Pintrich, Anderman, and Klobucer (1994) reported that students who experienced academic success, identify internal motivation as the major factor which, in turn, creates less anxiety and higher self-efficacy for the student. Furthermore, educators agreed that intrinsic motivation is better than extrinsic motivation because the factor is more closely related to achievement in learning (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

According to researchers (e.g., Aaron & Loprest, 2012; Dever, Raines, Dowdy, & Hostutler, 2016; Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014), students of racial/ethnic minority status are sometimes overdiagnosed with SLD and unduly assigned to special education programs, placing them at even greater disadvantages for academic success than mainstream students. Notably, Hispanics tend to be at significant risk for being overdiagnosed with SLD due to their limited English language proficiency, low levels of acculturation, and limited schooling (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011; Swanson, Kudo, & Guzman-Orth, 2016). In fact, English language

learners (ELLs) are among the lowest academic performing students in the U.S. (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance [NCEERA], 2014). Students classified as ELLs are often overdiagnosed with SLD due to their reduced language proficiency as well as the fact that instruments used to assess for SLD are frequently normed on English speakers (Creagh, 2013; Jozwik & Douglas, 2016) and may not provide an adequate representation of the student's actual performance, thus resulting in an erroneous diagnosis (Swanson et al., 2016). Students may also have a difficult time excelling in reading, writing, and/or mathematics (the three SLD domains) because they are not being well prepared to perform in academics (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011).

Research has reported that students overdiagnosed with SLD may develop poor self-esteem, decreased motivation, and less interest in school, which may, in turn, compound their failure to achieve academically. Additionally, the lack of social relationships with others such as their peers may lead to feelings of worthlessness and failing in school (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011). Students who are identified with SLD may also have other aspects affecting their learning, including poor personal interaction, poor health, low social economic status, discrimination resulting from racial/ethnic minority status, and lack of motivation.

Many Hispanics experience low social economic status (U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau 2015), with approximately 21.4% of Hispanics at or below the poverty level; those Hispanics with a disability comprise 28.8 % of people at or below the poverty level. When students are classified at a poverty level or low income status, the opportunity to learn may be limited. Often parents do not have a sufficient income to buy materials or school supplies for their children to attend school, which may result in poor educational outcomes (Coley & Baker, 2013). Poverty, limited language proficiency,

and lack of proper educational opportunities may result in special education program placement. Therefore, it is paramount that a formal SLD assessment considers all aspects of a child including language proficiency, level of acculturation, appropriateness of the child's current grade level, use of or non-use of language-sensitive assessment measures, and the child's attitude toward formal testing.

Specific Learning Disability

SLD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the brain's ability to precisely and proficiently distinguish or process verbal or non-verbal information (*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). An essential feature of SLD is the persistent difficulty to learn key academic skills including reading, reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, arithmetic calculation, spelling, and written expression (Aaron & Loprest, 2012; Code of Federal Regulations, 34 C.F.R. §300.7(c) (10) (2017); National Centers for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Students with SLD often struggle with academic performance, grade retention, course failure, low grade point average (GPA), and poor social and emotional skills (Aaron & Loprest, 2012; National Centers for Learning Disabilities, 2014). In addition, students with SLD usually perform at rates below students who do not have a SLD and are one-third more likely to be retained from passing to a higher grade than students without disabilities. Students with SLD may experience negative consequences throughout their lifespan including low rates of enrollment in postsecondary education, increased psychological distress, increased underemployment and unemployment, and low incomes (Aaron & Loprest, 2012; Gabriel & Davis, 2015).

Students with SLD may also have co-existing disabilities that compound their academic performance. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental

disorder characterized by executive functioning and impulse control deficits as well as inattention and impulsivity often is a disability paired with SLD (APA, 2013). Accordingly, students with SLD and ADHD experience severe attention problems (DuPaul, Gormely, & Laracy 2013). Students with ADHD may have impairments in reading, a dysfunction of visual and auditory processing, resulting in difficulty with decoding and spelling words (Gray, Climie, Kerges, & Santos, 2016). Furthermore, students with ADHD have problems with word reading, decoding and reading comprehension. Consequently, the negative experiences individuals with ADHD and SLD have, with regards to academics, may result in low self-esteem and low self-efficacy (Newark, Elsasser, & Stieglitz, 2012).

A gender difference has been found regarding students and SLD. According to Mertens, Wilson, and Mounty (2007) and the U.S. Department of Education (2004), minority male students are identified with SLD more often than minority female students. A possible reason for the identification of mostly boys into the special education program can be the possibility that ADHD and learning problems are present (Flood, 2001).

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory (SCT) is a learning theory which explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns while providing the basis for intervention strategies to enhance social cognition. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has the capability to organize and execute an action to obtain a result. Self-efficacy entails a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed or fail in a specific situation (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000). In addition, Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) suggested that those students who have high self-efficacy tend to be motivated; hence, they may be more successful than students who are not motivated. For example, individuals with a strong

sense of self-efficacy may exhibit high levels of confidence in their ability to succeed at difficult tasks rather than becoming fearful and avoidant of such tasks (Shi, 2016; Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2013). In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their abilities and subsequently demonstrate negative perceptions toward tasks due to their perceptions of their personal deficiencies (Chen & Usher, 2013; Kwasky & Groh, 2014; Shi, 2016; Usher & Pajares, 2006; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is the theoretical basis of this research.

Students are susceptible to perception of themselves or how others perceive them. According to Erikson (1950) the stages of development are very telling of an individual's behavior. Hence, the stage of identity versus role of confusion is present on adolescents ages 12 to 18. Students at this age are aware of their social relationships and they either feel adequate or not. When students are able to develop a sense of who they are they may feel successful and able to accomplish their goals. On the contrary, when students feel inadequate they have a sense of confusion and weakness which perhaps does not help their belief in themselves or capability to accomplish an action.

Self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Academic Achievement

According to Kolb (2011), self-efficacy is fundamental in the development of children. Kolb asserted students can improve their self-efficacy by acquiring social skills training (e.g., transitioning to the next grade level, problem solving, self-determination). In addition, social skills training may include the concepts of enhancing students' motivation, increasing their self-knowledge, exposing them to appropriate modeling by others, and teaching students observational learning skills. However, it is often difficult for students to improve their self-efficacy when they do not receive social skills training in the school setting. Kolb furthered

asserted most students under special education programs have a curriculum that includes social skills. However, in reality, one criticism leveled is that social skills training programs are not implemented properly, thus leading to student failure. Kolb further posited that the important social skills to be taught are in the areas of problem solving, self-determination, and successful transitioning. Problem solving is the process of finding solutions to complex issues and having the self-efficacy to act on the solutions. Self-determination is being able to produce an outcome that is desired. Transition refers to the ability of an individual to adapt to a new experience, e.g., to a new job, school, or community setting. Kolb recommended teaching self-efficacy interventions/strategies to enhance student skills both to students who have a regular curriculum and students who are in the special education program.

Bandura (1986) suggested that motivation and self-knowledge play an important role in the development of self-efficacy. Bandura stated that students who understand their capabilities and abilities are motivated to continue with learning. Oftentimes, students who maintain positive self-efficacy beliefs may be motivated to excel in academics (Bandura, 1997; Fast et al., 2010; Firth, Frydenberg, & Greaves, 2008; Gerber, 2012; Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Klassen, 2010; Lewis, et al., 2012; Luria, Kalish, & Weinstein, 2014; Shi, 2016). According to Zimmerman (2000), two decades of research have established self-efficacy as a predictor of students' motivation and learning. For example, students with SLD who have high self-efficacy and motivation may decide to take action in regard to their education by taking the initiative to access necessary accommodations to facilitate their learning. Such is the case of college students who take advantage of services offered at the college's disabilities office for testing accommodations or assignment accommodations based on the students' disability (Lindsey, 2016). Moreover, students with SLD may have learned to use their Individual Education Program (IEP) plans to

enhance their transition planning which may, in turn, help to increase their self-efficacy (Woods, Sylvester, & Martin, 2010). Through students' active role in embracing self-efficacy, they are able to experience positive academic outcomes.

Research has shown self-efficacy can predict student self-regulated learning and academic achievement (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008; Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007; Phan, 2011; Shi, 2016) as well as positive self-efficacy beliefs which may remain critical in academic development and achievement (Bozpolat, 2016; de Fur & Runnells, 2014). Motlagh, Amrai, Yazdani, Abderrahim, and Souri (2011) conducted a study among 250 high school girls and investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement wherein the students completed a self-efficacy scale and reported their achievement score grade point average (GPA). The authors concluded self-efficacy sub-factors such as self-evaluation and self-regulation were substantial predictors in academic achievement which reflected the students' GPA.

School Performance, SLD, and Hispanics

Hispanic students tend to exhibit lower self-efficacy compared to other racial/ethnic groups especially Caucasians. Lofgran, Smith, and Whiting (2015) were interested in researching students' perceived competence in science self-efficacy during the students' transition from elementary to middle to high school and to ascertain if there was a difference between gender and race/ethnicity during these three transitions. The students were asked to rate their self-efficacy in science on the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Muris, 2001), which consists of 21 items designed specifically for children. The findings indicated Hispanic students rated themselves significantly lower in science self-efficacy than Caucasians. The study also showed Hispanic females scored themselves lower in science self-efficacy than males across

grades. The consequences of the perception and self-rate may lead to low academic performance and low motivation as well.

Students who qualify for special education programs often have low motivation, experience limited academic success, and invest a correspondingly low amount of effort into completing their school work (Bergen, 2013). Bergen conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis to ascertain how self-efficacy impacts academic success, motivation with the special education population. The results of the study showed students with SLD frequently inappropriately rated their self-efficacy in that they *overestimated* their academic ability. These students were confident of their ability to undertake a task when in reality they were not capable of performing that particular task. Having realistic views (i.e., accurate self-measurement) of their capabilities can render students' successful performance on their school work. Other findings of the study indicated teachers had a positive impact on self-efficacy beliefs helping students with their self-efficacy and motivation to affect students' academic achievement. Teachers play an important role in increasing self-efficacy by the feedback and assistance they provide to students. Positive interventions and interactions among students with SLD can further increase students' self-efficacy which may, in turn, enhance students' willingness to perform better academically and attain good grades. Hence, research on self-efficacy, GPA, overestimation of academic skills, motivation, and achievement levels among students with SLD is important for the development of effective teaching strategies.

Hispanic Students

The terms Hispanic, Latino, and Mexican American will be used interchangeably in this research. The Hispanic population is the largest growing ethnic or racial minority group in the United States as well as in the nation adding up to 17% of the total population (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2015). Since the Hispanic population is the largest group, it would be suitable to learn more about any difficulties that they might be having as they increase in number. Hispanic individuals are a unique ethnic minority group who has individual needs just like any other racial group (Acosta, Weist, Lopez, Shafer, & Pizarro, 2004). However, Hispanics have a higher incidence of mental illness, behavior problems, and academic difficulties. Students are underserved serviced in the mental health area due to parents not having the insurance to attain services, not being aware of the illness, or the availability of mental health services by professionals especially those fluent in Spanish (Mc Kay, McCadam, & Gonzales, 1996). The behavior problems and the difficulties in academics are issues that sometimes are not addressed in the school setting either.

Moreover, Balfanz (2009) reported that Hispanic students have academic issues such as low GPA, higher number of grade retention, language barrier, and frequent placement in special education programs. In addition, Latino students are at risk with high dropout rates, drug and alcohol use, exposure to violence, and poverty (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Garcia-Coll & Garcia, 1995; Silva, 2015). In an effort to help the Latino youth, coalitions have been diligently dealing with the issues of the Latinos. The coalitions have been successful in the area of mental illness by providing mental health services to students who have depression, consequently lowering the depression rates. In addition, help is being provided in academics with proper interventions when students are struggling in reading, writing or mathematics, and as a last resort a special education referral is considered. Moreover, support is being given to students by teaching them to have positive attitude towards academics and, in turn, having students perform better in school (Armbruster, Gersetein, & Fallon, 1997). Some of the areas of need are being targeted but not all; therefore, other areas such as GPA, grade retention, and language barrier need attention.

Hispanics seem to be at a disadvantage especially in academics; therefore, it was appropriate to learn more about this population. This study focused on Mexican American students at the high school level who have a SLD with demographics such as GPA, failed grade levels, and language proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

Past and present studies (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 1983, 1990; Baird, Scott, Dearing, & Hamill, 2009; Bozpolat, 2016; Hen & Goroshit, 2014; Lackaye, Margalit, Ziv, & Ziman, 2006) have consistently illustrated a relationship between low academic performance, low academic expectations, low motivation, and low self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents with SLD. Historically, researchers (e.g., Bergen, 2013; Feldman, Kim, & Elliott, 2011; Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Klassen, 2006; Margolis & McCabe, 2004) have investigated comparisons between students with SLD and students without SLD. While some students with SLD may overestimate their capabilities (Bergen, 2013), students with SLD frequently exhibit a lack of effort and motivation as well as lower social and academic self-efficacy than students without SLD. An example of achievement and self-efficacy was illustrated by Jungert and Anderson (2013) who conducted a study among 143 5th-grade students in Sweden. The study was conducted to examine achievement and self-efficacy in mathematics and foreign language literacy in children with just mathematic difficulties and students with both mathematic and reading difficulties. The researchers established that children who had low self-efficacy had a history of low achievement which students may have interpreted as failures. The researchers also noted there were no gender differences between students with SLD and students without SLD in relation to academic self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated lower academic self-efficacy beliefs among children who had mathematic and reading

difficulties. The children also showed higher self-efficacy in their native language (Swedish) as opposed to the English language. The children without SLD had higher self-efficacy in the areas of reading and mathematics. Therefore, it is important to investigate Mexican American high school students with SLD who may not be proficient in the English language as to how they rate their self-efficacy and motivation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, descriptive study was to determine if a relationship existed between self-efficacy and independent variables such as grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career among Mexican American high school students with SLD residing along the southwestern state on the Mexican border. Furthermore, the study determined if a relationship existed between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career among Mexican American high schools students with SLD. Moreover, this study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD. Lastly, this study was conducted to learn if a relationship existed among motivation subscales as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA. The study was conducted to enhance the understanding of Mexican American students with SLD to improve their potential for successful education and life opportunities.

Research Questions

The current study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?
2. Is there a relationship between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?
3. Is there a relationship among the subscales comprising student motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA?
4. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

Research Hypotheses

In response to the research questions that were investigated, four hypotheses were derived as follows:

1. There is a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD.
2. There is a relationship between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD.
3. There is a relationship among the subscales of student motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA.

4. There is a relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD.

Definitions

Self-efficacy. The concept of a person's belief of his or her ability to succeed in a specific situation (Bandura, 1977) or the belief that an individual has the capability to organize and execute an action to obtain a result (Bandura, 1986).

Student Motivation. "The internal forces that determine the goals of a person" (Sutherland, 1995, p. 282).

Intrinsic Motivation. The participation in an activity which produces pleasure and satisfaction (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Extrinsic Motivation. The participation in various behaviors to complete an activity but not necessarily for pleasure (Deci, 1975).

Grade Point Average (GPA). Calculated by adding the total number of grade points divided by the total number of credits attempted (Roth & Bobko, 2000).

Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Specific deficits in an individual's ability to perceive or process information efficiently and accurately. This neurodevelopmental disorder first manifests during the years of formal schooling and is characterized by persistent and impairing difficulties with learning foundational academic skills in reading, writing, and/ or mathematics (APA, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The present study is to assist school principals, school counselors, rehabilitation counselors, special education teachers, and counselors who work with students who have SLDs to provide them with effective interventions and help them attain school success. The study is to

facilitate the expansion and continuation of knowledge in the area to self-efficacy and motivation among high school students especially those identified as Mexican American with SLD who have the goal of helping them become independent and self-sufficient. This study may also bring positive social change that includes increased awareness and knowledge of the effect self-efficacy and motivation of students with SLD. Students may be assisted by facilitating their awareness of the sense of self-efficacy and motivation through pertinent lessons which can facilitate their ability to gain confidence relevant to their daily activities in school. Professionals may be able to target areas of social cognition to aid in increasing students' self-efficacy and motivation, especially among students who have SLD. If school principals have a positive attitudes regarding enhancing the self-efficacy and motivation of students, they may transfer these attitudes to their teachers and in turn have their teachers demonstrate motivation and teach self-efficacy to students with educational needs (Urton, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014).

Special education teachers can help their students develop self-efficacy and motivation when teachers demonstrate a positive attitude and motivation regarding self-efficacy in teaching the students with special educational needs. For example, teachers can be positively motivating when giving feedback to students on their work and, in turn, encourage students to perform better in their school work. Teachers may also be able to engage students in activities such as realistic goal setting and success journal writing which can support increased levels of self-efficacy and motivation. In addition, the students' information on self-efficacy may be used to develop individual education plans (IEPs) designed to enhance the students' learning through optimistic beliefs of accomplishment. School personnel can be very specific in meeting the students' needs in regard to self-efficacy and motivation by using IEP information to assign proper accommodations for the students. If students feel empowered by acquiring self-efficacy,

they can often become motivated to learn and stay in school. The proper implementation of motivation may also help students feel empowered and able to persevere and, accordingly, be able to increase their self-efficacy in all aspects of their lives.

This study was designed to assess the relationships among self-efficacy, motivation, and GPA in hopes that professionals can facilitate self-efficacy and motivation enhancing strategies among Mexican American high school students with SLD. The study may also provide additional evidence to demonstrate the relationships among self-efficacy and motivation, GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, social economic status, and failed grade levels during school career. In addition, the research may be valuable for facilitating academic success among students with SLD who might be lacking self-efficacy and motivation. If students with SLD can benefit from proper implementation of activities to increase their self-efficacy and motivation, students may translate those successes in their future goals of attending postsecondary educational institutions or when seeking employment. These outlooks are congruent with Cobb, Lehman, Newman-Gonchar, & Alwell (2008) who reported that self-efficacy and motivation are key in successful post-graduation outcomes for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides literature related to self-efficacy, student motivation, and specific learning disabilities. In order to understand how self-efficacy and student motivation affect Mexican American high school students with SLD, there needs to be an understanding Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, Student Motivation, Students with SLD, Student Learning Challenges, SLD and Literacy Tasks, and SLD Eligibility Criteria.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977, 1982, 1986) posited self-efficacy beliefs may be formed by four sources of information: (a) mastery experience (performance accomplishments), (b) vicarious learning, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) positive physiological and affective state (emotional arousal). Mastery experience entails the ability to perform a task and experience success wherein failing the task may undermine the cognitive process of self-efficacy. According to Kudo and Mori (2015), mastery experience can promote self-efficacy of student's success. Kudo and Mori conducted an experimental study with 159 7th-grade students to observe the students' performance on anagram tasks. The anagram tasks consisted of 30 words students needed to rearrange to make other words. The students were placed under four experimental conditions: *success condition, control condition, cheerers,* and *vicarious condition*. The students then rated themselves on self-efficacy statements before and after completing the anagram tasks (e.g., how well they thought they were going to perform and how well they did the anagrams). The results

supported Bandura's mastery experience source of self-efficacy in that when students noticed their success in the anagram making, it created a positive effect in how they perceived themselves as capable individuals. This study is congruent with Chen and Usher (2013) who agreed with Kudo and Mori in the perspective that demonstrating mastery experiences can serve as powerful sources of self-efficacy.

Vicarious learning as it relates to self-efficacy occurs when an individual is able to follow a personal model and is able to see his/her achievements when compared to the achievements of others. When a child sees a close friend succeed at a challenge, (e.g., correctly doing multiplications voicing the answers) the child is given confidence that they also can recite multiplications. Observing a peer complete a task provides the child a vicarious experience of being able to complete the task themselves. An example of vicarious learning was observed in a study conducted by Craig, Gholson, Brittingham, Williams, and Shubeck (2012). The researchers conducted two experimental studies, one with 130 college students and the other with 143 high school students enrolled in physics classes at an inner city school. The purpose of the study was to promote vicarious learning through deep questioning and explanations. Researchers had teachers instruct students to view brief videos with information on Newton's laws of mass and friction and then tested students in four experimental conditions: *monologue, questions, explanation, and question and explanation.* High school students were presented with a video and teachers presented science information to these students during seven daily sessions; college students were presented with the video only. After conducting the study, the researchers concluded college and high school students were successful in the *question and explanation* condition which supported the concept of vicarious learning. The college and high school students were able to answer and explain the questions given to them. Accordingly, students

demonstrated increased self-efficacy with regards to answering questions. It was confirmed students were capable of learning through observation and discussion. Moreover, the researchers suggested that deep questioning together with learning of a new concept is imperative.

Verbal persuasion as it relates to self-efficacy consists of taking time and making the effort to facilitate an individual's belief in him or herself. An example of verbal persuasion was noted in a study conducted by Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, and Struyven (2010) who attempted to ascertain if students would exhibit verbal persuasion when exposed to fellow students' feedback on writing assignments the students had completed while in class. Specifically, the study involved 43 7th-grade students who were asked to work on writing assignments. These assignments consisted of a draft and a final text which were considered a pretest and a posttest, respectively. The writings were revised by fellow students participating in the same study. These students were of similar writing ability and were subsequently asked to give and receive justified (corrected) feedback. The results showed improvement in performance of students' writing yet learning gains were not significant. The students increased their self-efficacy with regards their writing after having received feedback from their fellow student participants. Through this study, it was noted verbal persuasion through feedback seems to be present when positive feedback is given to individual students.

Positive physiological and affective states entail individuals perceiving tension as a way to enhance a level of performance which, in turn, can work as an agent to learn and succeed. A child encounters a problem to be solved; the experience is new and his/her blood pressure goes up, breathing becomes shallow and heart rate increases. The physiological response is positive in that it's preparing the child to perform by arousing the central nervous system. Concurrently, the child enters into an emotional state of anxiety. The context of the new problem to solve

would either increase self-efficacy in that the child is alert and ready, or the child interprets the context as pressure and this lowers their ability to perform. Joet, Usher, and Bressoux (2011) provided an example of positive physiological and affective state via their assessment of self-efficacy and language, self-efficacy and mathematics, and gender difference among 395 3rd-grade elementary students in France. The students were given two questionnaires designed to measure self-efficacy in mathematics and self-efficacy in the French language. The results of the measures showed boys had high self-efficacy, self-regulatory efficacy (student's academic motivation), mastery experience (interpretation of student's own performance), social persuasion (others' ratings towards this students), and low physiological arousal (perceived tension while completing a task) in the areas of mathematics and the French language while girls showed high self-efficacy in the French language and reported low self-efficacy for self-regulated learning in mathematics. In addition, the girls rated their mastery experience and social persuasion lower than the boys in mathematics and showed negative physiological and emotional arousal toward mathematics. The study was not explicitly on physiological and affective states because the researchers were attempting to ascertain how much each of the four sources of self-efficacy was accounted for in this particular study.

Chen and Usher (2013) used an instrument designed to measure students' opinions regarding science classes and their opinions about being science students among 1,225 middle and high school students enrolled in science courses. The researchers' questions were adapted from a variety of instruments which they grouped together under the following headings: *sources of self-efficacy* (Usher & Pajares, 2009), *science self-efficacy* (Bandura, 2006), *implicit theory of ability* (Dweck, 1999), *and person-centered analysis* (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). The instrument utilized was not group administered to the participants which measured the four sources of self-

efficacy. The students completed the instrument with the assistance of research assistants who were available to clarify any questions students had while taking the survey. The results of the study demonstrated the four sources (i.e., mastery experience, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and positive physiological and affective state) of self-efficacy were predictive of science self-efficacy and science achievement as measured on standardized test scores. Therefore, students who resorted to using positive feelings when they master a science activity, observe others and themselves doing well in science assignments, listen to their teachers or peers giving them positive feedback, and have a positive physiological domain, perform better in school in the area of science. Chen and Usher (2013) noted that the four sources of self-efficacy can be predictive of success in the academic area.

Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997) maintained self-efficacy beliefs either support or hinder individual efforts in academic performance based on how the individual perceives him or herself. Individual's performance impacts goal setting, task approach, task persistence, and overall levels of motivation. Bandura (1986) further noted low self-efficacy is manifested when individuals overestimate their capabilities, lack the necessary equipment or resources, have physical or social restraints, have faulty self-knowledge, and have self-doubt. Bandura (1993) suggested low levels of self-efficacy can be improved by attaining positive outcomes on performance of cognitive, motivational and affective domains. For example, if an individual attempts a task and sees him or herself accomplishing the task, the individual may feel motivated to continue performing the task and may feel satisfaction as a result of the accomplishment. Consequently, achieving repeated positive performance outcomes among students with SLD can strengthen perceptions of self-efficacy.

Student Motivation

Motivation has been recognized as an area of essential importance for students' learning (Lai, 2011). Motivation is the relatedness of beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions of individuals. Furthermore, Gottfried (1990) describes academic motivation as pure enjoyment of learning when the students are able to see themselves successful, curious, and persistent in learning new, challenging tasks. Educators play an important role in creating motivating environments for the students. Students who have positive motivating experiences develop psychological empowerment traits which are necessary to persevere when accomplishing tasks. Perseverance is a crucial quality in many aspects of life. According to Zimmerman and Schunk (2008), students who are motivated try to become independent learners, tend to be more attentive, show more progress, demonstrate more effort, and appear to have more satisfaction than students who are not motivated. Motivation is crucial for students to attain goals and a belief that they can accomplish a task that needs to be completed (Bandura, 2002; Lackaye & Margalit, 2008).

Unfortunately, students with SLD might be lacking motivation in the academic area. The results of a study conducted by Grolnick and Ryan (1990) demonstrated that lower academic motivation was present in students with SLD. Grolnick and Ryan conducted a study of 148 third through six-grade students identified with SLD, students not identified with SLD that had a similar IQ as students with SLD, randomly selected students without SLD, and low achieving students. The purpose of the study was to examine self-perceptions, motivational orientations, and classroom adjustments among students with and without SLD. In addition, the study collected data on how students accepted responsibility of any given task. The study also measured whether the student credited the outcome of the task to external or internal sources. The students were divided into groups: students identified with SLD, students not identified with

SLD that had a similar IQ as students with SLD, randomly selected students without SLD, and low achieving students were given specific measures of self-concept, perceptions of control, and motivation. Additional information was collected such as classroom teachers' rating of students' motivation and classroom behavior adjustments. The final results indicated that students identified with SLD had lower perceived cognitive competence, academic self-regulation, and lower motivation compared to the students not identified with SLD that had a similar IQ as students with SLD, randomly selected students without SLD, and low achieving students. In addition, students identified with SLD had a tendency to perceive academic outcomes as controlled by others such as classroom teachers.

The topic of students with SLD who struggle with motivation has been previously researched. According to Melekoglu (2011) students with SLD struggle with learning to read and motivation to continue with their learning. The purpose of the study was to evaluate students' motivation of reading and if the reading was correlated with reading gains of students with SLD or without SLD who were struggling in reading. A reading program was implemented over 18 weeks for five days a week. Melekoglu conducted the study as quasi-experimental one-group pre-test, post-test design without a control group. The treatment consisted of technology-integrated instruction to increase reading achievement and motivation. The students in the study were 38 middle and high school students with and without SLD who were administered the Adolescent Motivation to Read Survey (Pitcher et al., 2007). The survey addressed intrinsic motivation towards reading and initiative towards reading skills improvement. The results of the study showed gains in reading for students with and without SLD; however, students with SLD did not show improvement on their motivation to read while the students without SLD did show an increased motivation to read.

Research has been conducted with a focus on determining if students with SLD and non SLD have different developmental paths. Findings showed differences between the two groups on measures of self-efficacy, loneliness, effort and hope of students with SLD who have lower scores; hence, age was a factor in middle school students with SLD who had smaller differences between their measures in contrast to students with nonSLD. High school students had greater differences between the two groups indicating students with SLD and nonSLD had somewhat different developmental path (Lackaye & Margalit, 2008). On the other hand, students with SLD are taught appropriate learning strategies, they can experience increased self-efficacy, academic resourcefulness, motivation, increased internal locus of control (Reed et al., 2009), and achieve a greater GPA (Allsopp, Minskoff, & Bolt, 2005; Troiano, Liefeld, & Trachtenberg, 2010). When students with SLD express positive skills and exhibit self-determination and self-advocacy, they have increased levels of high school completion (Morningstar et al., 2010; Murray & Naranjo, 2008; Wu & Chu, 2012). In addition, Waxman and Huang (1996) reported that when motivation and student environment improve, in turn, students' academic achievement and self-efficacy improve.

Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Students with SLD often struggle with academics and social cognitive problems such as self-efficacy and, as such, they may tend to more easily give up on themselves. According to Bandura (1986), students with SLD are more susceptible to low self-esteem and reduced self-efficacy than students without SLD. Consequently, students with SLD may have academic doubts stemming from a lack of self-regulatory learning such as strategic planning, self-monitoring, and accurate self-evaluation (Klassen, 2010), all of which are associated with self-efficacy. Since students with SLD often struggle in their learning, they tend to have a self-

perception that may conflict with their motivation to strive to perform to succeed in literacy tasks and academics (deFur & Runnells, 2014). For example, studies have historically revealed students with SLD may be at risk for developing self-perception problems such as low self-efficacy beliefs (Clever, Bear, & Juvomen, 1992; Kurtz & Hicks-Coolick, 1997; Schunk, 1989). Other studies also illustrate students with SLD tend to have co-morbid levels of learned helplessness, diminished persistence, low academic expectations, and academic struggles and challenges (Baird et al, 2009; Costa, Edwards, & Hooper, 2016; Jungert & Anderson, 2013; Hen & Goroshit, 2014). Learning about Mexican American high school students with SLD may be valuable to ascertain if historical trends wherein Mexican American students show low self-efficacy remain problematic and ultimately hinder their academic progress.

Students' Learning Challenges

Many students with SLD are perceived by school personnel as underachievers and likely to be below their expected grade level. Subsequently, students may not make the effort to try to excel in their academic pursuits (Lambie & Milsom, 2010; Schonfeld, Brailovskaia, Bieda, Zhang, & Margraf, 2015). Furthermore, students with SLD are often called disparaging names by other students which can compound discouragement and negative self-perceptions. Social skills problems, risk behaviors, low grades, and reduced literacy have been steadfast predictors of high school dropout, low graduation rates, suspension, and expulsion among students with SLD (deFur & Runnells, 2014; Doren, Murray, & Gau, 2014; Gabriel & Davis, 2015).

An opposing view on students' academic outcomes was posited by Wang and Neihart (2015) who asserted a positive view regarding students' academic outcomes via qualitative study conducted among six twice-exceptional students in Singapore. The students identified as "twice-exceptional" are students who are gifted or potentially gifted students with at least one identified

disability. The identified disability can be an emotional disorder, a physical disability, or may consist of behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Asperger's Syndrome (Baum, 2004; Neihart, 2008; Silverman, 2009). The researchers implemented an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) consisting of a qualitative approach designed to investigate the sensitivity of academic self-concept and academic self-efficacy via a semi-structured interviews among the student participants (Wang & Neihart, 2015). The findings revealed students having support from a circle of significant people in their lives had a positive impact among the twice-exceptional students. The significant people were identified as parents, teachers, and peers who could help students achieve academically, behaviorally, and psychologically. The contributions of this study are in academic strategies use, academic engagement, and academic self-efficacy that can benefit the students when being implemented. The academic strategies refer to having students benefit from their strengths rather than their deficits. The academic engagement refers to having the responsibility to complete what was assigned to the students. The academic self-efficacy refers to actually having twice-exceptional students who are familiar with a certain concept teach other students who are not familiar with the concept.

A small percentage of students with SLD continue to post-secondary educational status; however, these students often have a difficult time accomplishing their academic pursuits and may be dropped from college or suspended due to low grades (deFur & Runnels, 2014). According to Newman et al. (2011), students with SLD have a very slim possibility of obtaining employment, earning a living wage, and enrolling in or completing a postsecondary education in college. It also appears a correlation may exist between challenging behaviors such as misbehavior, dropout rates, and learning difficulties (Doren, Murray, & Gau, 2014).

Nonetheless, dropout rate may decrease if students with SLD exhibit self-determination, a positive self-concept, and self-advocacy (Morningstar et al., 2010; Morningstar, Trainor, & Murray, 2015; Murray & Naranjo, 2008).

Another concern regarding students with SLD is the difficulty the students have in writing, a subject that is often neglected due to teachers not having trained sufficiently to teach students especially as it relates to teaching students with SLD (Harris, Graham, Friedlander, Laud, & Dougherty, 2013). Gabriel and Davis (2015) conducted a study regarding the implementation of writing strategies among students in middle and high school residing in a high poverty region in California to ascertain if students with SLD could learn writing strategies if the students were faithfully taught every day. The researchers implemented the Strategic Instructional Model (Schumaker & Sheldon, 1999) which incorporates explicit instructional techniques in writing, *Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy* in five different classrooms with five special education teachers and 38 students identified with SLD. The results were obtained by means of pre- and post- tests, pre- and post-intervention attitude surveys, student worksheets, progress charts, and interviews. The results indicated students gained proficiency when the writing strategies were implemented consistently. Students' attitudes toward the value of writing improved only minimally, however. According to the researchers, the reason that students' attitude might have had minimal improvement in the writing could be due to the students' disability or not seeing the importance of writing in order to succeed in school.

Students who have difficulty in reading and writing may not try as hard to perform well in school and/or to master reading and writing skills as students who do not have reading or writing difficulties and they often become less motivated to persevere in difficult literacy tasks (Botsas & Padeliadu, 2003; National Institute for Literacy[NIL], 2007; Shi, 2016). Literacy task

difficulties may be related to low self-efficacy and less self-confidence (deFur & Runnells, 2014; Wang & Neihart, 2015). According to the National Governors Association (2010), students with SLD reported the sensation of not being challenged enough to be at the appropriate grade level during their high school years even though current education policies (i.e., *No Child Left Behind*, 2002) ruled children in public schools would be successful and at appropriate current grade level. Uncertainty is palpable in discerning appropriate education for students in special education might not be appropriate (Aaron & Loprest, 2012). Furthermore, 25% of high school seniors with varying disabilities reported being dissatisfied with literacy classes (i.e., reading, writing, and mathematics) taught at school (Repetto et al., 2011).

Reading is not the only area where students with SLD struggle. As noted by Allsopp and Haley (2015), math curriculum factors may also be affecting students with SLD. The reason students with SLD might have knowledge gaps in mathematics may be due to the mathematics curriculum failing to emphasize concepts and procedures that can develop proficiency in mathematic concepts. For example, students with SLD are able to notice they lack sufficient knowledge to master mathematical curriculum concepts and may, in turn, develop learned helplessness and passive learning. Consequently, more students with SLD in mathematics are falling behind in mathematics than students without SLD in mathematics. As such, this could be a problem because it is not just the disability that keeps them from learning but the lack of knowledge that is keeping the students with SLD more behind than students without SLD.

SLD and Literacy Tasks

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (National Governors Association, 2010) reported 40% of high school graduates did not possess the reading and writing skills needed for postsecondary education or employment success. Hence, students with

disabilities who graduate lacking sound reading and writing skills often have difficulty in post-secondary education and post-graduate employment (deFur & Runnells, 2014). A study by Graham and Harris (2013) revealed children with SLD tend to lack self-confidence as evidenced by reduced motivation to persevere in their writing skills which can lead to self-doubt regarding their writing tasks at school. Thus, students with SLD may exhibit learned helplessness in literacy due to their accumulated failures (deFur & Runnells, 2014). According to deFur and Runnels, many students with disabilities in middle and high school often fail the same grade level twice; this failure may be due to the students' lack of participation and completion of assignments while in school. Repetitive failures may cause students with SLD to learn fewer academic skills and to manifest limited self-efficacy, resulting in students' difficulty completing grade-level academic work (Klassen, 2010). Students with SLD often fall behind in school when they struggle to learn basic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics. When students with SLD are lacking basic skills, they tend to show weaknesses in other academic skills (Sparks & Lovett, 2014) and tend to have a difficult time becoming independent, lifelong learning individuals.

The poor academic skills observed in students with SLD may be associated with self-regulatory learning. deFur and Runnells (2014) stated that there was evidence that an individual's literacy skill which may be identified as self-efficacy and performance in achievement are interconnected. As noted by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2014), students with SLD tend to have lower GPAs than students who do not have SLD. Students with SLD who have a history of low achievement have a tendency to display low-self-efficacy (Jungert & Anderson, 2013). Furthermore, students with low-self-efficacy tend to have poor work results, low self-esteem, and negative thoughts regarding future accomplishments

(Vasile, Marhan, Singer, & Stoicescu, 2011). Under these circumstances, it is important to examine self-efficacy among students with SLD and to ascertain whether a correlation exists between academic performance and grade point average (GPA). According to Bergen (2013), self-efficacy and SLD need to be examined to understand students' academic needs. Learning about students' needs can aid academicians and researchers in their efforts to create the most effective and innovative instruction and curricula for students with SLD.

SLD Eligibility Criteria

The Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA, 1975) Federal Regulations (34 CFR §§ 300.307–300.311) outlines the procedures to establish the need for special education services nationwide (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). In addition, the Region 18 Education Service Center (ESC) Legal Framework (2015) established specific determinant factors for a student to be evaluated for specific learning disability (SLD). If a student is suspected of having a SLD and the SLD identification is not the result of lack of appropriate instruction in reading, mathematics, or written expression, a group of qualified educational professionals are required to consider data that demonstrates the student was provided with the appropriate instruction in the areas of reading, mathematics, and written expression. The data consists of documentation of individual assessments and evaluations performed through the course of a predetermined time (e.g., six weeks) and may include responses to intervention paperwork (RtI), tests on grade-level, or regularly administered assessments. RtI is an evidence-based instructional intervention approach that might help avoid disproportion of representation in special education program (Harris-Murri, King, & Rostenberg, 2006; Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014). This documentation include weekly tests, bench marks, and or state examinations. The RtI is a data-based process of decision making which is directed in a Multi-

Tier System of Support (MTSS) for early identification of students with learning and behavioral difficulties and disabilities (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014).

Another model designed to screen students who are struggling in the general classroom is the *Strengths and Weaknesses Model* (The Region 18 Education Service (ESC) Legal Framework, 2015) which can be used to recognize patterns of strengths and weaknesses of students in order to meet the eligibility for SLD. Individual students are observed to determine if there are patterns in performance and/or achievement. The pattern shall be relative to age, state-approved grade-level standards, and/or intellectual development. The eligibility criteria for students with SLD is determined using several assessment tools and strategies conducted by the district's diagnosticians (The Region 18 Education Service (ESC) Legal Framework, 2015). Diagnosticians are typically individuals who have a Master's degree in Education or in Special Education with a certification as an Educational Diagnostician who work specifically in a special education department at a school district. When students who do not perform at their chronological age or when students do not meet approved grade-level standards in one or more areas (e.g., written expression, basic reading skills, mathematics problem-solving), the targeted problem areas are assessed by the district's diagnosticians to determine eligibility for SLD. Students who lack adequate achievement on multiple measures such as in-class tests, grade average over time, norm or criterion referenced tests, statewide assessments, or students' responses to scientific research-based intervention are identified as students with SLD.

This literature review explored self-efficacy, motivation, and SLD to better understand the population that was studied. The next chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It includes the participants, research design, instrumentation, and data analysis. The chapter

summarizes the four questions in this study and how they are answered through the statistical analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOGY

Participants

A sample of convenience was recruited given the limited accessibility of students with SLD residing in the southwestern state along the Mexican border. As stated by Creswell (2014), samples of convenience are types of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population are participants and meet certain practical criteria of an entire population. The criteria in this research was Mexican American high school students, grades 9-12, diagnosed with SLD. The sample was drawn from five high schools within three school districts located in a southwestern state on the Mexican border. A list of students with SLD was drawn from the districts' Student Data System-Public Education Information Management System-Education Students by Disability Report (TSDS PEIMS SESDR) which assisted in identifying those who were eligible to participate in the study. The students identified with SLD and their parents were asked to voluntarily participate in the study during a school meeting which was attended by parents/guardians and the identified participant students. The meeting with the researcher, parents/guardians, and students provided an opportunity to inform them about the study. For those parents/guardians and/or students who were not able to attend the meeting, the information (written in English and Spanish) was sent home with the student that same day.

In order to determine the specific number of students participating in the study, a power analysis was conducted. Power analysis (Soper, 2017) is used to determine the sample size

required to detect an effect of a given size with a given degree of confidence. In this study the effect size (.80) was computed by a power analysis based on the number of variables independent (n = 6) and dependent (n = 1). Accordingly, 75 students were required to participate in order to have an effect size of .80 at an alpha of .05 (Cohen, 1992). The number of student participants in this study was 81.

Setting

The setting for the proposed study was three school districts located on a southwestern state along the Mexican border. The three districts that participated in this study were coded as A, B, and C. District A had a total of 6,600 students and 1,680 were enrolled at high school. There were 368 students in the Special Education Program and 80 were at the high school level and the number of students with SLD was 51 (Student Data System [PEIMS], 2016). District B had a total of 12,600 students and 2,880 were enrolled at two high schools. There were currently 868 students in the Special Education Program and 400 were at the high schools and the number of students with SLD was 154 (Student Data System [PEIMS], 2016). District C had a total of 15,337 students and 3,000 were enrolled at two high schools. There were 1,127 students enrolled in the Special Education Program and 240 students at the high schools and the number of students with SLD was 138 (Student Data System [PEIMS], 2016). The districts were chosen based on availability for this research study. The population of the districts consisted of mainly Hispanics. The percentage of Hispanics in District A was 99%, District B was 98%, and 96% in District C.

Procedures

The researcher contacted the superintendent and special education director for permission to approach high school campus administrators and prospective student participants to ask for

volunteers for the study. The researcher obtained written permission (i.e., letters of support) to conduct the study. The researcher then met with high school campus administrators to arrange a meeting for the prospective participants. Consequently, the researcher later met with parents/guardians and students at an arranged meeting which was specifically arranged to inform the parents/guardians and students about the study. The researcher distributed the informed consent and demographic questionnaire to parents/guardians and prospective student participants. When parents/guardians and potential student participants were not able to attend the meeting, potential student participants were asked to take a packet home for parents/guardians to review and sign consent to the student's participation in the study. The packet consisted of the consent forms (written in English and Spanish) and a demographic questionnaire (written in English and Spanish).

Once the student participants returned the consent forms and the demographic questionnaire to the school's designated personnel, students were asked to take the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for children ([SEQ-C], Muris, 2001) and the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The researcher administered the surveys, ASES from SEQ-C and SRQ-A, and was available to address specific questions regarding the surveys and the study.

In addition, the student's GPA was collected from the high school counselors. Information pertaining to language proficiency, social economic status, and grade levels failed during school career were also be collected by the researcher from the student participants' records.

Research Design

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative study was to derive the relationship between self-efficacy, student motivation, GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, social economic status, and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD. The data for the study was derived from a population of five high schools from three different districts. For research purposes of this study the alpha level was set at .05.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were utilized in this research. The instruments were: the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children ([SEQ-C], Muris, 2001); the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire ([SRQ-A], Ryan & Connell, 1989); and the demographic questionnaire.

Dependent/criterion measures. Two of the instruments used for the collection of data for this study were: (a), the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children ([SEQ-C], Muris, 2001) (see Appendix A), and (b) the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire ([SRQ-A], Ryan & Connell, 1989) (see Appendix B). The ASES from SEQ-C has been used in clinical settings and presents established psychometric properties. The SRQ-A has also been used in clinical settings and presents established psychometric properties.

The academic self-efficacy subscale from the self-efficacy questionnaire for children. The Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children ([SEQ-C], Muris, 2001) was developed to assess three domains of self-efficacy: social, academic, and self-regulatory efficacy (emotional self-efficacy). Social self-efficacy pertains to how children can handle social challenges; academic self-efficacy refers to how children perceive their capability to master academic activities; and self-regulatory efficacy or emotional

self-efficacy pertains to the ability to face peer pressure when engaging in challenging activities. The SEQ-C was designed specifically for middle school and high school populations (youth ages 14-18; grades 8-12) (Lofgran, Smith, & Whiting 2015; Muris, 2001). The ASES from SEQ-C includes 24 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being *Not at all*; and 5 being *Very well*. The SEQ-C consists of 24 items, which three of the items were taken from Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, and Caprara (1999) research on "Self-efficacy Pathways to Childhood Depression." For the integrity of this research, an *Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)* was utilized since it was a more appropriate scale due to the population and type of investigation that was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .88 for the total self-efficacy score construct and criterion related validity and for the subscales it was between .85 and .88 (Muris, 2001). The ASES average Cronbach's alpha ranges from .85 and .88. The SEQ-C adheres to Bandura's guidelines for constructing self-efficacy instruments (Bandura, 2006b).

Muris (2001) published the first study of the SEQ-C (Suldo & Shaffer, 2007). The first validity study was conducted among 330 Dutch students ages 14-17 (Muris, 2001). Muris utilized exploratory factor analyses for a 21-item version of the SEQ-C which supported the existence of three factors: social, academic, and emotional self-efficacy. The three factors accounted for 56.7% of total variance. The SEQ-C was also administered to 596 students, ages 12-19, from Belgium (Muris, 2002). Exploratory factor analyses was conducted which the three factors (social, academic, and emotional) accounted for 52.3% variance. The Cronbach's alphas were derived for the 21-item version: the scales were .82, .84, and .86 for social, academic, and emotional self-efficacy, respectively. Due to the results of previous studies, Suldo and Shaffer (2007) decided to assess the SEQ-C with American youth.

According to Suldo and Schaffer (2007), the SEQ-C may be utilized to assess multidimensional self-efficacy for American youth. Suldo and Schaffer conducted two studies to address the psychometric properties of the SEQ-C among 697 middle and high school students and also among 318 high school students. Both studies were carried out with predominantly Caucasians and African Americans; other minorities were included minimally such as Asian Americans and Hispanics. The correlation between subscales (social, academic, and emotional self-efficacy) was significant, positive, and moderate in magnitude (range=.46 to .49). The internal consistency was explored and the results were as follows: academic = .82, emotional = .79, and social = .73.

A number of studies have examined the validity and reliability of the SEQ-C. For example, Habibi, Tahmasian, and Ferrer-Wreder (2014) explored the psychometric properties of the SEQ-C with a Persian sample. An item analysis was conducted with corrected item-total correlations and the results were as follows: academic self-efficacy .25, social self-efficacy .40, and emotional self-efficacy .32. The internal consistency coefficients test-retest reliability coefficients were derived. The results for the psychometric tests were run twice as a total score and subscale scores. The first time the total score was .80, with individual subscale scores for social .77, academic .90, and emotional .87. The second time the total score was .68, with individual scores for social .79, academic .82, and emotional .89; the results yielded a high internal validity of .90 Cronbach's alpha for the 21-item version and subscale scores of .82 (social self-efficacy), .84 (academic self-efficacy), and .86 (emotional self-efficacy). Furthermore, Minter and Pritzker (2015) examined the psychometrics of two subscales of Muris' SEQ-C: Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) and Social Self-Efficacy (SES). The study was performed among 3,358 adolescents from different ethical backgrounds to measure the validity

of the instrument for different racial/ethnic subgroups. The Cronbach's alpha for ASE ranged from .84 to .86 across racial/ethnic groups, and Cronbach's SES ranged from .77 to .86 across ethnic subgroups. The results established and confirmed the SEQ-C scale as a construct that generated meaningful relations to other psychological constructs as well to verify the psychometric properties of the scale.

The academic self-regulation questionnaire. The Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire ([SRQ-A], Ryan & Connell, 1989) was based on the self-determination theory which is utilized for studies of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2002). The SRQ-A was originally developed for students in the elementary and middle school to explore the reasons students do their school work (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The questionnaire consists of 32 items on a 4-point *Likert scale* with 4 being *Very True*; 3 being *Sort of True*; 2 being *Not Very True*; and 1 being *Not at All True*, divided into four subscales: *external regulation, introjection regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation.* The total scores can be obtained by scoring the subscales and then averaging all the items in each subscale. The SRQ-A was utilized as the most appropriate scale due to the population and type of investigation being conducted.

In a study conducted by Soric´ (2009) the Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated for the SRQ-A (Deci & Ryan, 1989). Soric´ conducted a study in Croatia with 127 7th -grade primary students in an effort to investigate the relationship between the four types of motivation or regulatory styles of learning according to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000); and students' causal attributions for the attainment of academic achievement according to attribution theory (Weiner, 1985, 1992). The theories have been long implemented to understand student's learning and achievement. The purpose of the study was for the 7th- grade students to assess their final mid-term grades with either *success* or *failure* but because students had a different

perspective on their assessment a more objective measure was implemented with a self-reported questionnaires (Soric´, 2009). The Academic Self-Regulatory Questionnaire ([SRQ-A], Ryan & Connell, 1989), and the Causal Attribution Scale ([CAS], Soric´, 1998) were utilized for this study. The SQR-A was adapted to a Croatian population of children. The students reported on the SQR-A four subscales: external regulation, introjection regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. The scores of the subscales were calculated and the one-factor structure of each subscale was confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the four subscales were as follows: external regulation .71 on nine items, introjection regulation .72 on nine items, identified regulation .75 on seven items, and intrinsic motivation .81 on seven items. The scores of the subscales were acceptably high (Soric´, 2009).

The CAS (Soric´, 1998) was administered and scored but the scores were not sufficiently reliable to be used for other studies than the one being conducted at that time (Soric´, 2009). The results of the study showed that intrinsic motivation helped students feel autonomous and self-determined; consequently, considered success due to internal and controllable causes that only the students could control.

A study was conducted by Ryan and Connell (1989) to demonstrate the construct validity of the SRQ-A. The study was performed to learn about student academic achievement and prosocial behavior through the perceived locus of causality ([PLOC], Heider, 1958). The PLOC refers to how an individual perceives or infers the motives or intentions of others in a given situation. Ryan and Connell were able to establish that internal (autonomy) or external (control) behaviors were streaming from PLOC. The study went on to discuss how the researchers conducted four investigations with elementary and middle school students to learn about their academic achievement and prosocial behavior. The four investigations examined the correlation

between four loci of motivation such as external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic. The results of the study revealed that a model of locus of causality was identified in academic achievement and prosocial behaviors. The evidence of perceived locus of causality and continuum of autonomy was present in the study. Consequently, the SRQ-A indicated having construct validity as the internal and external behaviors results of the study reflected the expectations of Ryan and Connell (1989).

Other studies conducted by Grolnick, Ryan and Deci (1991), Patrick, Skinner, and Connell, (1993) have demonstrated test reliability. In addition, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was also measured within the four motivational regulations of the SRQ-A (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The Cronbach's alpha were as follows: external regulation .78, introjection regulation .75, identified regulation .61, and intrinsic motivation .85.

The dependent/criterion variables for the present study is self-efficacy as measured by the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASAS) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children, SEQ-C; and motivation as measured by the SRQ-A.

Independent/predictor measures. An instrument to collect personal data was the demographic questionnaire measure (see Appendix C). Also other personal information, mentioned below, for each individual student participant was collected.

The student participants' GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, and failed grade levels of schooling career were collected from the high school counselors, and permanent record card (PRC). The GPA ranged from 0 to 100. Age ranged from 14-18 years. The gender was stated on the Permanent Record Card (PRC). The language proficiency status was obtained from the PRC with records of the English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores. The TELPAS is an assessment given to students with limited English proficiency to measure

their progress as English language learners (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2007-2017). The scores ranged from 1 to 4. The score levels were as follows: 1 =beginning, 2 =intermediate, 3 =advanced, and 4 =advanced high. Number of failed grade levels ranged from zero, one, or two during the student participant school career which was also part of the student's PRC and were coded as follows 0 = non-failed grades, 1 = one failed grade, and 2 = two failed grades.

The socioeconomic status was obtained from the income eligibility survey form that the school district maintains. Socioeconomic status was coded as follows 0 = economically disadvantaged with free lunch, and 1 = economically disadvantaged with reduced lunch, and 2 = non-economically disadvantaged.

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire measure was comprised of a set of questions for the purpose of obtaining relevant background information for the student participants, including age, gender, class information, race/ethnicity, current grade and level, retention information, place of residence, and time of SLD identification/diagnosis.

IRB

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study. The application, with detailed information on the study, was submitted for approval. Once IRB approved the study, the data was collected.

Recruitment

The high school student participants and their parents/guardians were invited to a meeting where the present study was discussed. Specifically, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, eligibility criteria, and when and where the study was going to take place. Once the parents/guardians agreed to their child's participation in the study, they were asked to provide

written consent and to complete the demographic questionnaire during the meeting. Consequently if the parents/guardians were unable to attend the meeting, student participants were given a packet containing the consent form (written in English and Spanish) and the demographic survey to take home to their parents/guardians. Once the students returned the completed and signed packets to the school to the designated researcher, student participants were asked to take the ASES from SEQ-C and the SRQ-A. The ASES from SEQ-C (see Appendix B) was distributed to the student participants with SLD to measure the students' self-efficacy. In addition the students received the SQR-A to measure the students' motivation. Students were assisted by the researcher as needed for clarification on any of the questions of the ASES from SEQ-C and SRQ-A. After the demographic, ASES from SEQ-C and SRQ-A data were collected, the data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 (2013) for inferential and analysis of data.

Data Analyses

The method of data for the present study was mostly multiple linear regression analyses. For purposes of this research study the alpha level was set at .05. The null hypotheses was tested with an *F* distribution at the .05 level of significance. Once the null hypotheses were rejected, the effect size was established through the multiple regression coefficient squared. The first step in data analysis was to screen the data after it had been collected (Pallant, 2013). The accuracy of the data was cross validated. Data was not missing, therefore, the data was completely utilized; this is referred to as complete case analyses or listwise deletion. There were no deletions performed; a regression substitution (estimating missing values) was conducted to determine if there was missing data. A regression substitution entails a linear regression by using existing variables to make a prediction which substitutes the predicted value as an actual

obtained value. This method can maintain the problem of error variance yet this method increases the sample size and reduces standard of error. Univariate outliers were checked. If the data failed to meet the assumptions of normality, then the appropriate data transformation was decided. Exploratory and confirmatory data analyses were used side by side in the present study (Tukey, 1977).

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

2. Is there a relationship between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

Regression analysis was utilized to analyze questions one and two from the obtained data. The null hypothesis for the present study was tested with an *F* distribution at the .05 level of significance. Multiple linear regression was identified as the appropriate quantitative descriptive analyses for the study. The multiple linear regression was analyzed in the relationship between dependent variable which is self-efficacy and the independent variables which are grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career among Mexican American high school students with SLD (Warner, 2013). The dependent or criterion variable is being regressed on the independent variables. The null hypothesis for the present study was tested with the *F* distribution at the .05 level of significance. The present study addressed the questions on self-efficacy and if self-efficacy was a function of GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during

school career among Mexican American high school students with SLD. The dependent/criterion variable, self-efficacy, may be a function of independent/predictor variables.

For the second research question, the multiple hierarchical regression was analyzed in the relationship between dependent variable which is student motivation and the independent variables which are grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career among Mexican American high school students with SLD. The data was reviewed for the assumptions for multiple regression analysis including variable of normality of distribution, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity between and among independent/predictor variables.

3. Is there a relationship among the subscales comprising student motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA?

For the third research question, the multiple linear regression analyzed the relationship between dependent variable which is GPA and the independent variables which are subscales of the SRQ-A including external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. The data were reviewed for the assumptions for multiple regression analysis including variable of normality of distribution, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity between and among independent/criterion variables.

4. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

To answer research question four, Pearson Product Moment (PPM) correlations were derived between self-efficacy and student motivation scores. The data analyses assumed bivariate normality of distribution for the PPM.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of the dissertation is to address the relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and failed grade levels among Mexican American high school students with specific learning disabilities (SLD). This chapter presents the results of demographics and statistical analysis of the research which includes Pearson Product Moment (PPM) correlation, and multiple linear regression.

Demographics

This study consisted of 81 participants ranging in age from 14 to 18 years, with 37% (N = 30) females and 63% (N = 51) males. For this study females were significantly fewer than males, a chi-square of independence was used ($\chi^2 = 5.44$, df = 1, $p < .05$). The 81 participants were enrolled at high schools in a southwestern state along the Mexican border at the time of the study. The participants were high school students who were between grades 9^{th} to 12^{th}.

Descriptive Statistics

The following data was computed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 (2013). The participants were a total of 81 males and females (N = 81). Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of males and females.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Females	30	37%

Males	51	63%
Total	81	100%

Table 2 contains participants English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores which were utilized to determine language proficiency of individual students. The TELPAS scores can range from 1-4. The meaning of LEP is limited English proficient and NLEP is non-limited English proficient (no English proficiency limitations, regular English proficiency) is presented on the table below (Table 2). The majority of the participants were students with a TELPAS score of a two (53%).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: TELPAS Scores

	Frequency	Percent
*LEP-1	18	22%
**LEP-2	43	53%
***LEP-3	6	8%
****NLEP	14	17%
Total	81	100%

*LEP-1 = 1 beginning level, **LEP-2 = 2 intermediate level, ***LEP-3 = 3 advanced level, ****NLEP = non-limited English proficient (no English proficiency limitations, regular English proficiency)

Table 3 represents socioeconomic status of the 81 participants in frequencies and percentages. The school districts qualify students for free or reduced school lunch depending on the parents' economic status. The participants were categorized by economically disadvantaged with reduced or free school lunch and non-economically disadvantaged who may pay for school lunch. The majority of the participants receive free lunch (70%).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Socioeconomic Status

	Frequency	Percent
*EDRFL	57	70%
**EDRRL	16	20%
***NED	8	10%
Total	81	100%

*EDRFL-economically disadvantaged receiving free lunch, **EDRRL-economically disadvantaged receiving reduced lunch, ***NED-non-economically disadvantaged

Table 4 represents the failed grade levels by the participants. The participants' school records of failed grade levels during their educational career are recorded as zero, one, or two years. Most of the participants failed one grade (65%) throughout their schooling career.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics: Failed Grade Levels

Number of Grades Failed	Frequency	Percent
0	24	30%
1	53	65%
2	4	5%
Total	81	100%

The following tables describe the instruments' individual means. The instruments are Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)**,** and Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A). Table 5 and Table 6 contain the mean of each individual item for the two instruments. The tables are arranged in descending order by mean. Table 5 has item SEQ-C5 (How well can you pay attention during every class?) with the highest mean (M = 3.85, SD = 1.14) and item SEQ-C3 (How well can you study a chapter for a test?) with the lowest mean (M = 2.72, SD = 1.34). Table 6 has the top five highest mean items which are SRQ-A30 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because it's important to

me to try to do well in school) (*M* = 3.75, *SD* = .62), SQR-A 25 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because that's what I'm supposed to do), SRQ-A 31 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because I will feel really proud of myself if I do well), SRQ-A 11 (Why do I work in my classwork? Because I want to learn new things), SRQ-A 6 (Why do I do my homework? Because that's what I'm supposed to do). It also contains the lowest five mean items at the bottom of the list which are SRQ-A 13 (Why do I do work on my classwork? Because it's fun), SRQ-A 7 (Why do I do my homework? Because I enjoy doing my homework) (*M* = 2.37, *SD* = 1.18), SRQ-A 19 (Why do I try to answer hard questions in class? Because I enjoy answering hard questions), SRQ-A 22 (Why do I try to answer hard questions in class? Because it's fun to answer hard questions), and SRQ-A 3 (Why do I do my homework? Because it's fun).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics: Individual ASES from SEQ-C Questions in Descending Means and Standard Deviation

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
SEQC5	3.85	1.14
SEQC7	3.79	1.46
SEQC1	3.57	1.35
SEQC6	3.38	1.29
SEQC4	3.13	1.46
SEQC8	3.11	1.19
SEQC2	2.80	1.35
SEQC3	2.72	1.34

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics: Individual SRQ-A Questions in Descending Means and Standard Deviation

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
SRQA30	3.75	.62

SRQA25	3.70	.70
SRQA31	3.69	.72
SRQA11	3.63	.78
SRQA6	3.52	.87
SRQA16	3.49	.87
SRQA14	3.46	.88
SRQA8	3.44	.99
SRQA10	3.37	1.00
SRQA26	3.33	1.02
SRQA20	3.28	.98
SRQA21	3.28	1.05
SRQA28	3.27	.97
SRQA5	3.26	1.05
SRQA1	3.21	1.07
SRQA9	3.15	1.14
SRQA27	3.12	1.11
SRQA32	3.09	1.22
SRQA23	3.07	1.10
SRQA2	3.05	1.15
SRQA29	3.01	1.19
SRQA24	2.91	1.13
SRQA12	2.78	1.21
SRQA15	2.69	1.20
SRQA4	2.61	1.24
SRQA17	2.59	1.16
SRQA18	2.46	1.28
SRQA13	2.37	1.18
SRQA7	2.35	1.17
SRQA19	2.30	1.20
SRQA22	2.30	1.20
SRQA3	1.99	1.11

Variables

Table 7 contains the average of the $N = 81$ participants' grade point average (GPA). The GPA is based on 0 to 100 range. The age ranges from 14 to 18 years old. The mean and standard deviation for GPA were ($M = 74.67$, $SD = 8.76$). The mean and standard deviation for age were ($M = 16.11$, $SD = 1.12$). The GPA scale of 74.67 will be interpreted as a C average.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics: Grade Point Average and Age

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
GPA	74.67	8.76
AGE	16.11	1.12

GPA = Grade point average

The GPA for males was lower (M = 72.87, SD = 8.85), than females (M = 77.73, SD = 7.83). The combination of GPA and age (M = 74.67, SD = 8.76; and M = 16.11, SD = 1.12).

Table 8 represents GPA for male and female with significant difference (t = -2.49 df = 79, p< .01).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics: Using t-test for Gender and GPA

Gender	GPA				
	N	M	SD	*t*-test	*p*
Females	30	77.73	7.83	-2.49	.01
Males	51	72.87	8.85		

The females seem to be older than the males (M = 16.68 and SD = .94) and (M = 15.92 with SD = 1.18). Females were significantly fewer than males, (t = -2.03, df = 79, p < .01) represented on Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics: Using t-test for Gender and AGE

Gender	AGE				
	N	M	SD	*t*-test	*p*
Females	30	16.18	.94	-2.03	.01
Males	51	15.92	1.18		

Correlation of Variables

A Pearson Product Moment (PPM) correlation analysis was utilized to address the relationship between Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)**,** and Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) instruments. The results tend to suggest a relationship between self-efficacy and motivation. The ASES from SEQ-C was correlated at the .01 level of significance ($r = .36^{**}$, $p < .01$).

A Pearson Product Moment (PPM) correlation analysis was conducted with both instruments and demographics. Table 10 represents the results demonstrate that ASES from SEQ-C and SQR-A were correlated at a .01 level of significance ($r = .36^{**}$, $p < .01$). Age and GPA were correlated ($r = .22^{*}$, $p < .05$). Gender and GPA were correlated ($r = .27^{*}$, $p < .05$). Gender and age were correlated ($r = .22^{*}$, $p < .05$). Failed grade levels and GPA were correlated ($r = -.26^{*}$, $p < .05$). None of the coefficient conditions variables were high and the variables were independent from each other; therefore, multicollinearity was not a problem.

Table 10

Pearson Product Moment Intercorrelation Matrix for ASES from SEQ-C, SRQ-A, and Demographics

	(ASES) SEQ	SRQ -A	GPA	AGE	GENDER	ESLTE LPAS	SES	FGRADES
ASES (SEQ-C)	1	.36**	.14	-.08	-.04	-.01	.19	-.08
SRQ-A		1	.12	-.05	.18	.17	.16	-.09
GPA			1	.22*	.27*	.01	.14	-.26*
AGE				1	.22*	.02	-.02	.07
GENDER					1	.17	.00	.02

ESLTELPAS	1	-.14	-.16
SES		1	-.13
FGRADES			1

*p < .05, **p < .01
(ASES) SEQ-C = Self-efficacy instrument, SRQ-A = motivational instrument,
GPA = grade point average, AGE = age, GENDER = male and female,
ESL/TELPAS = level of English Language Proficiency,
SES = Socioeconomic Status (based on free, reduced, or not free lunch),
FGRADES = grades failed throughout school career

Statistical Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and number of failed grades of Mexican American high school students with SLD? Self-efficacy was measured with the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C). A multiple linear regression analysis was used to derive a relationship between self-efficacy and demographic variables. There was no statistical significance in the regression analysis of the demographics and the SEQ-C; therefore, the data failed to reject the null hypothesis indicating that there was no relationship between self-efficacy and demographics. The summary of regression analysis for demographics predicting SEQ-C (N = 81) is on Table 11. The overall model does not show significance F (6, 74) = .48, *Adjusted* R^2 = -.04. The model explains 4% of variance accounted for by predictor variables.

Table 11

Demographics Regressed on Self-Efficacy

Variables	Model 1		
	B	*B SE*	*β*
GPA	.02	.01	.17
AGE	-.06	.08	-.10
GENDER	-.10	.19	-.07

ESLTELPAS	.00	.10	.00
SES	-.02	.13	-.02
FGRADES	-.05	.17	-.03
Adjusted R^2		-.04	
F		.48	

Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and number of failed grades of Mexican American high school students with SLD? Motivation was measured with the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A). A multiple linear regression analysis was used to derive a relationship between motivation and demographic variables. There was no statistical significance in the regression analysis of the demographics and the SRQ-A; therefore, the data failed to reject the null hypothesis indicating that there is no relationship between motivation and demographics. The summary of regression analysis for demographics predicting SRQ-A (N = 81) is on Table 12. The overall model does not show significance F (6, 74) = .93, *Adjusted* R^2 = -.01. The model explains 1% of variance accounted for by predictor variables.

Table 12

Demographics Regressed on Self-Efficacy

Variables	Model 1		
	B	*B SE*	*β*
GPA	.01	.01	.08
AGE	-.05	.06	-.10
GENDER	.17	.15	.14
ESLTELPAS	.10	.08	.14
SES	-.04	.10	-.04
FGRADES	-.05	.13	-.04
Adjusted R^2		-.01	
F		.93	

Research Question 3. Is there a relationship among the subscales comprising student motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA? A multiple linear regression analysis was used to derive a relationship between subscales of motivation and GPA. There was no statistical significance in the regression analysis of the subscales of motivation and GPA; therefore, the data failed to reject the null hypothesis indicating that there is no relationship between subscales of motivation and GPA. The summary of regression analysis for subscales of motivation regressed on GPA (N = 81) is on Table 15. The overall model does not show significance F (6, 74) = .94, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The model explains 0% of variance accounted for by predictor variables.

Table 13

Regression Statistics of Motivation Subfactors with GPA

Variables	Model 1		
	B	*B SE*	*β*
External Regulation	4.17	2.49	.31
Introjected Regulation	-1.48	2.92	-.11
Identified Regulation	.25	2.17	.02
Intrinsic Motivation	-1.21	2.73	-.08
Adjusted R^2		-.00	
F		.94	

Research Question 4. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD? The summary of correlation analysis among (ASES) SEQ-C and SRQ-A (N = 81) is on Table 13. The correlation among the Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)**,** and Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) is a positive correlation which tends to suggest a relationship between self-efficacy and motivation at the .01 level of significance (r = .36**, $p < .01$).

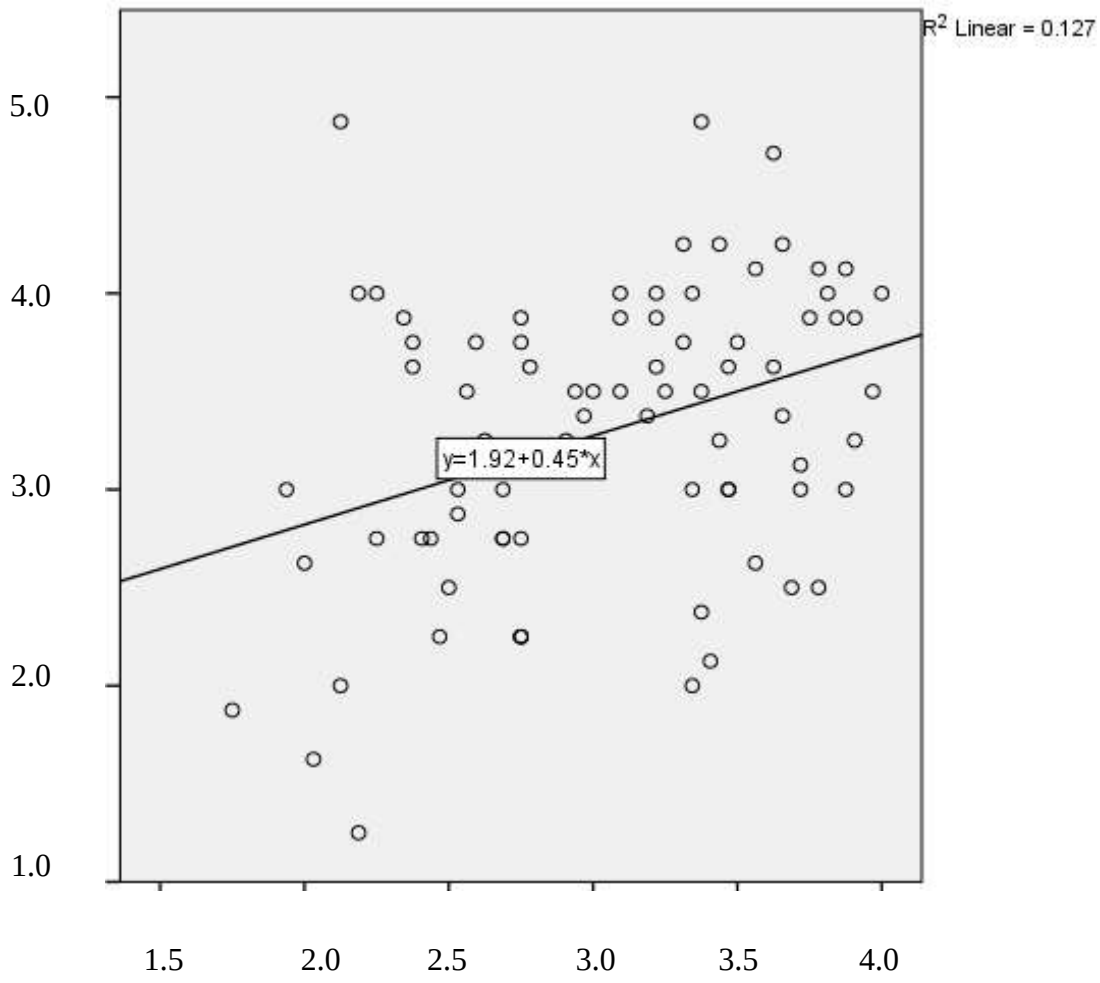
Table 14

Correlation of (ASES) SEQ-C and SRQ-A

	SRQ-A	(ASES)SEQ-C
SRQ-A	1.00	.36**
(ASES) SEQ-C		1.00

** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1. Correlation Between Self-Efficacy and Motivation



The summary of SRQ-A was regressed on (ASES) from SEQ-C on Table 14. The equation for linear regression is, y = 1.92 + .45. Where 1.92 is the constant and .45 is the B coefficient.

Table 15

Demographics Regressed on Self-Efficacy

Variables	Model 1		
	B	*B SE*	*β*
SRQ-A	.45	.13	.36**

** $p < .01$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

One observation from this study was females had a significant higher GPA then males (N = 51) even when the females (N = 30) were less in number. The females were older than the males which could possibly mean that girls were identified with SLD later than the males. Males seem to be identified younger and more often than the females; therefore, the number of males may be more than the females. According to Mertens, Wilson, and Mounty (2007) boys are overly identified earlier than the girls. Boys may be identified more often than girls due to their active behavior such as ADHD. Due to the males active behavior teachers focus more on them and notice the lack of attention during instruction and, hence a need for more structured and individual instruction. This is when teachers start the referral process to the special education program and as a result students might become identified at this time.

Another observation is that females tended to be older and have a higher GPA than males. This result may suggest that females might mature earlier than males, thus seeing the need to perform better in school. Females may think or know that if they do well in high school, they may have better opportunities to enter college and earn a degree to later have productive employment.

The participants seem to be doing better as they age. The participants that were older in age had a better GPA than the younger participants. As students with SLD age they may mature cognitively and their abilities to do other activities may also expand. Students might notice the

importance of performing better at school due to their future endeavors. School counselors may aid students to continue with their gains of their knowledge by supporting them with lessons dealing with self-efficacy, motivation, and self-esteem.

Another result noted was that the more the students failed grade levels, the lower the GPA. This may result in a negative attitude towards school. Consequently, counselors can use this information to move the students from negative to positive attitudes or views. Counselors may motivate the students by reminding them that after the experience of failure; now they are knowledgeable of what is expected of them and can try to live up to the expectations required to be successful in classes. Other examples may be used to motivate students to remain positive towards school such as current media about celebrities like Tom Cruise and Henry Franklin Winkler who have disabilities and failed throughout their young years of life; yet they raised above their circumstances. These actors did not give up, they had self-determination to reach their goals; they persisted and turned the negative circumstances into positive situations. Students can do the same thing and move on in life. Students can be taught strategies of motivation, self-determination, and tenacity to continue in their journey through life with the best outlook into the future.

While doing the analysis of the data, the instruments of Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) and the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) were positively correlated which may suggest a relationship among self-efficacy and motivation. It may be suggested that students who have self-efficacy may have motivation. Previous research reports that students with SLD have reported high self-efficacy such is the study conducted by Joet, Usher, and Bressoux (2011) where students were given two questionnaires to measure their self-efficacy on mathematics and French language

according to gender. The results of the study were that females have a high self-efficacy in French language and that males had a high self-efficacy in mathematics. In regards to motivation and self-efficacy, Jaafar, Awaludin, and Bakar (2014) suggest that motivation has a strong relationship with self-efficacy among students' academic performance.

Perhaps these students are experiencing identity versus role of confusion Erickson (1950); in this stage adolescents ages 12 to 18 have a meaningful event in their life which is social relationships. When students have identified who they are in society, they can successfully stay true to themselves and have a positive self-esteem and may be motivated to reach their goals.

According to Bandura (1977, 1986, 1972) vicarious learning helps or affects students. Students see themselves compared to others and feel that they can do as well or as bad as others. If students see their peers with motivation to achieve more than likely they will see themselves as such, but if the opposite is true they will also pick up on the unmotivated students and probably become similar to those students. As they become more self-aware and compare themselves to their peers, they may feel competent or not. In the case of this study, it seems to be that students do have a positive outlook of their self-efficacy and motivation. However, counselors may always be of assistance to students by guiding them to continue increasing their self-efficacy and motivation.

Implications

The implication of this study can very well represent what students with SLD may have such as self-efficacy and motivation as other research concur with this study. Students can continue to be encouraged to improve their self-efficacy and motivation through educational strategies. Strategies that can assist students in believing in their capabilities, staying positive

throughout their education journey, and enthused through life. Counselors and teachers can have classes where they can teach about self-efficacy and motivation through success journaling. Students can set goals and write their goals; they can also notice their successes and write about them in the success journal. Students can then look back and be able to see what they want and what they have accomplished so far. This journal writing experience can aid their future outlook.

Motivation was found to be related to self-efficacy in this study; according to Gottfried (1990) teachers play an important role in motivating the students. Teachers can be positive role models for student motivation. Aside from teachers being role models, they can display motivation by giving positive affirmations, displaying positive quotes of motivation in the classroom, and using the appropriate vocabulary of motivation when talking to students.

Another important finding in this study was that the demographics of the participants did not predict either self-efficacy or motivation. A suggestion from this outcome may be that the students' background may not matter on the students' self-efficacy and motivation. It is possible that the students' background is not a cause to place students at a disadvantage when attempting to acquire self-efficacy or motivation. An implication of this finding may suggest to find other variables that are less static and study their relationship in students who have SLD. Perhaps emotional intelligence, social skills, psychosocial development and career maturity might be variables worth studying to determine if they have a predictive relationship with both self-efficacy and motivation of students with SLD.

While recording the results on the instruments' (Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)**,** and Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) individual items, several observations were noticed on the students'

responses. The item with the highest score was number 5 on the ASES from SEQ-C (How well can you pay attention during every class?) and the item with the lowest score was number 3 of ASES from SEQ-C (How well can you study a chapter for a test?). Students reported being able to do well in paying attention in class, yet low in studying a chapter for a test. It is important to know that students can focus in class and pay attention. However, students in this study need help to learn how to study for a chapter. Strategies may be taught to students in regards to studying for a chapter; for example, teach them how to summarize paragraphs as they are reading the chapter. Students can also be taught to take notes while reading a chapter. They can learn to take breaks while studying a chapter by setting a timer after several minutes of reading. These strategies may be able to help the students to stay focused and trust that they can remember what they studied for a test.

In the SRQ-A, the top five items and the bottom five items were recorded. The SRQ-A's highest five items were as follows: Item number 30 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because it's important to me to try to do well in school), item number 25 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because that's what I'm supposed to do), item number 31 (Why do I try to do well in school? Because I will feel really proud of myself if I do well), item number 11 (Why do I work in my classwork? Because I want to learn new things), and item 6 (Why do I do my homework? Because that's what I'm supposed to do). The top five items seem to be mixed with internal and external regulation; perhaps strategies can be targeted for internal locus of control to manage external locus of control. These items suggest that students stay motivated by knowing that they want to do well in school because they want to feel proud of themselves and strive to stay motivated to learn new things.

The SRQ-A's five lowest items were as follows: Item number 3 (Why do I do work on my classwork? Because it's fun), item number 7 (Why do I do my homework? Because I enjoy doing my homework), item number19 (Why do I try to answer hard questions in class? Because I enjoy answering hard questions), item number 22 (Why do I try to answer hard questions in class? Because it's fun to answer hard questions), and item number 3 (Why do I do my homework? Because it's fun). It seems that students do not feel motivated because they are not enjoying what they are doing or learning. In order to assist these students, a helpful way would be to have an inventory to know what the students are interested in doing. Perhaps finding out what counselors can utilize to help the students stay connect with what they can learn, and like to do may benefit the students. Students need to know that if they have an idea as to what their future might look like they will try to do well in school. Students need to be motivated to think positively about their future life so that the students' attitude can change. Teachers can help by having students write positive notes to themselves and help them change from negative to positive thinking.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the selection bias. A sample of convenience from high school students with SLD was chosen from three school districts whose population is mostly Hispanics. With regards to the selection bias, the study will not be generalizable to the population of Mexican American students with SLD unless the students have the same characteristics as the students from this study. Another limitation is that data collected included self-report measures. It was possible the student participants might have over or underestimated their abilities to perform successfully in school and how motivated they were in school; consequently, they may have reported their beliefs and not actual ability. In addition, SLD may

manifest at different levels of function in academics for each individual student. In this study students with SLD are being treated as a homogeneous group; therefore, responses may vary for each individual student.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine different variables in relation to self-efficacy and motivation among Mexican American high school students with specific learning disabilities. One reason was to learn if a relationship existed between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and number of failed grade levels. Second reason was to learn if a relationship existed between motivation and GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and number of failed grade levels. Another reason was to learn if the subscales of the motivation survey (Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A), (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) had a relationship with the students' GPA. The last reason was to learn if there was a relationship between self-efficacy and motivation among the students with SLD.

The current study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

2. Is there a relationship between student motivation and grade point average (GPA), age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status and failed grade levels during school career of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

3. Is there a relationship among the subscales comprising student motivation as measured by the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (i.e., external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation) and GPA?

4. Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and student motivation of Mexican American high school students with SLD?

In summative, four conclusions may be suggested from this study. For the participants in this study, self-efficacy may not be predicted from demographics (GPA, age, gender, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and number of failed grade levels) of students with SLD. For the participants in this study, motivation may not be predicted from demographics of students with SLD. For the participants in this study, specific motivation factors may not predict GPA. A possibility may exist for the participants in this study that students with SLD who have self-efficacy may also have motivation, yet the relationship was not very strong.

Recommendations

The outcome of this study is to develop a manual to aid counselors to help students ameliorate the effects of SLD. This manual would need to be field tested and validated within the population of students with SLD. Further research can consider exploring personality factors such as emotional intelligence. Learning if self-efficacy and/or motivation can be predicted from people's emotional intelligence can be an important relationship to explore.

A recommendation is that the total scores of self-efficacy may not be sensitive enough to measure what the relationships would have been among demographics. It is recommended to explore self-efficacy with subscales and gender. Since the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation was not very strong, perhaps conducting a study with students in districts with low,

middle, and high socioeconomic status might be a possibility to have a stronger relationship between self-efficacy and motivation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Academic Self-Efficacy Subscale (ASES) from Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) Muris, 2001

Please check the box that best describes your beliefs and perceptions when attempting a task.

	Not at all				Very well
	1	2	3	4	5
1. How well can you get teachers to help you when you get stuck on schoolwork?					
2. How well can you study when there are other interesting things to do?					
3. How well can you study a chapter for a test?					
4. How well do you succeed in finishing all your homework every day?					
5. How well can you pay attention during every class?					
6. How well do you succeed in understanding all subjects in school?					

7. How well do you succeed in satisfying your parents with your schoolwork?					
8. How well do you succeed in passing a test?					

Please feel free to write any additional comments you may have regarding self-efficacy.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation.

Muris, P. (2001, 2002). Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C). Key references: A brief questionnaire for measuring self-efficacy in youths. Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Assessment, 23, 145-149. Relationships between self-efficacy and symptoms of anxiety disorders and depression in a normal adolescent sample. Personality and Individual Differences, 32, 337-348. Three items of this questionnaire were taken from Bandura et al. (1999). See: Bandura, A., Pastorelli, C., Barbaranelli, C., & Caprara, G.V. (1999). Self-efficacy pathways to childhood depression. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76, 258-269.

Appendix B

Academic Self-Regulatory Questionnaire (SRQ-A)
Ryan and Connell, 1989

The Scale (standard version)
WHY I DO THINGS
Name: _____
Age: _____
Grade: _____
( ) Boy or Girl ( )
Teacher: _____

	Very true	Not very true	Sort of true	Not at all true
A. Why do I do my homework?				
	1	2	3	4
1. Because I want the teacher to think I'm a good student.				
2. Because I'll get in trouble if I don't.				
3. Because it's fun.				
4. Because I will feel bad about myself if I don't do it.				
5. Because I want to understand the subject.				
6. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.				

7. Because I enjoy doing my homework.				
8. Because it's important to me to do my homework.				
	Very true	Not very true	Sort of true	Not at all true
B. Why do I work on my classwork?				
	1	2	3	4
9. So that the teacher won't yell at me.				
10. Because I want the teacher to think I'm a good student.				
11. Because I want to learn new things.				
12. Because I'll be ashamed of myself if it didn't get done.				
13. Because it's fun.				
14. Because that's the rule.				
15. Because I enjoy doing my classwork.				

16. Because it's important to me to work on my classwork.				
	Very true	Not very true	Sort of true	Not at all true
C. Why do I try to answer hard questions in class?				
	1	2	3	4
17. Because I want the other students to think I'm smart.				
18. Because I feel ashamed of myself when I don't try.				
19. Because I enjoy answering hard questions.				
20. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.				
21. To find out if I'm right or wrong.				
22. Because it's fun to answer hard questions.				
23. Because it's important to me to try to answer hard questions in class.				

24. Because I want the teacher to say nice things about me.				
	Very true	Not very true	Sort of true	Not at all true
D. Why do I try to do well in school?				
	1	2	3	4
25. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.				
26. So my teachers will think I'm a good student				
27. Because I enjoy doing my school work well.				
28. Because I will get in trouble if I don't do well.				
29. Because I'll feel really bad about myself if I don't do well.				
30. Because it's important to me to try to do well in school.				
31. Because I will feel really proud of myself if I do well.				

32. Because I might get a reward if I do well.				

Thank you for your participation.

Reference for original SRQ-A (the standard version)
Ryan, R.M., & Connell, J.P. (1989). Perceived locus of causality and internalization: Examining reasons for acting in two domains. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 749-761.

Appendix C

Belief Questionnaire

Your completion of this survey is very important. The information collected in this study is expected to increase knowledge and understanding of (children) students' beliefs in their attempt on a task and also how motivated they are to do their school work. As parents/guardians and (children) students, it is important to understand if they believe they can be successful in school and have the motivation to accomplish a given task. Through your participation, we hope to increase our understanding of your (child) student's perspective of self-efficacy and motivation. This study can provide useful information for school principals, school counselors, special education teachers, and rehabilitation counselors to guide students with specific learning disability (SLD) towards school success.

The information gathered from this survey is confidential. The data will be encrypted and stored in a locked file cabinet and only the researchers will have access to the information. Your participation is voluntary. Completion of this survey indicates you have given your consent to participate. You will receive no money or other compensation for your participation. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please do the following:

1. Read and sign the consent form.
2. Complete the demographic survey.
3. **Return the consent form and the completed demographic survey** to your (child) student's high school.
4. Once you turn in the consent form and the demographic questionnaire, your child will be asked to complete a short survey designed (ASES of SEQ-C) to measure his/her beliefs of being able to complete a task and SRQ-A to measure his/her motivation to complete a task which is school related.

Belief Questionnaire

Dear Participant/Guardian:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. We want to collect some basic information about you in this short questionnaire and would appreciate it if you could answer these questions to the best of your knowledge.

Please place an *"X"* next to your response OR *write* your response on the line provided.

1. **What is your child's age: _____**

2. **What is your child's gender:**

   ❑ Male ❑ Female ❑ Other (please specify):_____

3. **What is your marital status:**

   ❑ Married❑ Single ❑ Living with partner :_____ ❑ Other (please):_____

4. **Family size:**

   ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑3 ❑ 4 ❑ 5 ❑6 ❑ 7 ❑ 8 ❑ 9+

5. **With which race/ethnicity does your child most identify?**

   ❑ American Indian/ Alaska Native ❑ Asian ❑ Black/African American ❑ Hispanic/Latino
   ❑ Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander ❑ White (non-Hispanic) ❑ Other (please specify):_____

6. **Please check the grade in which your child is currently enrolled.**

   ❑ 9th ❑ 10th ❑ 11th ❑ 12th

7. **Has your child failed any classes?**

   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ do not know

8. **If your child failed classes, how many? _____**

9. **Has your child failed any grade levels?**

   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ do not know

10. If your child failed a grade level, how many? _____

11. With whom does your child reside all or the majority of the time?

❑ Both parents ❑ Single parent ❑ Foster parent

❑ Extended family member (e.g., grandparent, aunt/uncle) ❑ Other (please specify):_____

12. How much time does your child spend per day in a special education classroom?

❑ Only has a co-teacher ❑ 1 class period ❑ 2-3 class periods ❑ 4-5 class periods

❑ Do not know

13. Do you know your child's grades (e.g., your child's grades in reading and math)?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

14. At what point during your child's education was he or she identified as having a specific learning disability?

❑ Pre-kindergarten ❑ Elementary School ❑ Middle School

❑ High School ❑ Other (please specify): _____

15. Do you have other children with disabilities?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Other (please specify): _____

16. How many hours per week does your child spend doing homework?

❑ 6 hours or more ❑ 3 to 5 hours ❑ 0 to 2 hours

17. Does your child ask for help while doing his/her homework?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

18. Do you help or review homework with your child?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

19. Does your child want to go to college after high school?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

20. Does your child want to work after high school?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matilde Barrera Alaniz attained her Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Bilingual Education from The University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas in 1995. She also earned a Master of Guidance and Counseling at The University of Texas-Pan American in 1998. She completed the requirements for her Doctorate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from The University of Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas in 2017.

During her doctoral education, Dr. Barrera Alaniz worked as research assistant and teaching assistant for the School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. While in these positions, she had the opportunity to teach courses, guide students, and work on a research project. Dr. Barrera-Alaniz has a research interest in individuals with learning disability, self-efficacy, and motivation. She has presented at different conferences on different disabilities as well as attended professional trainings related to disabilities.

Dr. Barrera Alaniz has worked for Roma Independent School District for the past 23 years where she has actively participated in helping children, adolescents, and adults who may have different kind of disabilities. She has kept her private practice at her community for more than 10 years where she sees children, adolescents, and adults. Aside from doing therapy, she does consultation and training in these settings. She can be contacted via email at matyalejandra@yahoo.com “Yo se quien soy, yo se que quiero, y para donde voy.”-Dr. M.B.A.