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The Effect of Ethnic Identity and Bilingual Confidence on Chinese Youth's Self-Esteem

This study examines the interrelated issues of private and public domains of self-esteem, ethnic identity formation, and bilingual confidence among youth of a minority group in a city in western Canada. One hundred, ten Chinese students aged 11-18 from a Chinese-language school were randomly surveyed. Most items of the instrument are derived from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Cultural-Free Self-Esteem Inventories, and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Participants' self-confidence with the English and Chinese languages is also investigated. Zero-order correlate analysis and a two-way MACOVA controlling for GPA are used to examine potential factors that influence Chinese youth's global, academic, and social self-esteem. The results confirm the importance of ethnic identity on minority youth's global self-esteem. Moreover, self-confidence with bilingual proficiency has a great effect on Chinese youth's global, academic, and social self-esteem.

Cette étude porte sur plusieurs questions tant privées que publiques et reliées entre elles : l'estime de soi, la formation de l'identité ethnique et la confiance par rapport à ses compétences bilingues, chez un groupe de jeunes minoritaires dans une ville de l'Ouest canadien. L'enquête a porté sur 110 élèves chinois âgés de 11 à 18 ans, choisis au hasard, qui fréquentent une école de langue chinoise. La majorité des questions proviennent des questionnaires suivants qui évaluent l'estime de soi: Échelle de mesure de l'estime de soi de Rosenberg, CulturalFree SelfEsteem Inventories et Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Nous avons également évalué la confiance en soi que ressentent les participants par rapport aux langues anglaise et chinoise. Une analyse corrélée d'ordre 0 et une MACOVA bidirectionnelle contrôlant la MPC ont servi dans l'étude des facteurs pouvant influencer l'estime de soi académique, sociale et générale des jeunes Chinois. Les résultats confirment l'importance de l'identité ethnique sur l'estime de soi globale des jeunes minoritaires. De plus, la confiance en ses capacités bilingues influence beaucoup l'estime de soi générale, académique et sociale des jeunes Chinois.

Adolescence is a challenging time of physical, social, intellectual, and emotional change, and self-esteem is widely acknowledged as one of the important factors in adolescent development (Battle, 1981; Harter, 1993; Reasoner, 1986; Rosenberg, 1986). In particular, it is more salient on psychological adjustment and intergroup relations among minority youth because a low level of self-esteem may limit their social contacts to only a small group (Niebrzydowski, 1990; Phinney, 1993; Scott, 2000). In such immigrant-receiving countries as Canada and the United States, the development of positive self-esteem among minority students becomes pressing in terms of an increasing proportion of immigrant students in the educational systems.

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Current studies of group identity and self-esteem have, however, problematic issues on social and research validity in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity. First, without considering the effect of ethnic identity and cultural differences on the multifaceted domains of self-esteem, much of the research has resulted in controversial and inconsistent findings among minority groups (Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Harper & Marshall, 1991; Mullis, Mullis, & Normandin, 1992). Second, most of the research on self-esteem related to minority groups has been conducted in the US and has focused on specific ethnic groups such as African Americans and Latino Americans. There has been little research on this topic with Asian adolescents in Canada (Lan, 1992). Third, most studies have looked for correlations between various measures of group identity and self-esteem without considering other factors that may confound the relationship. It is, therefore, not clear how much group identity contributes to self-esteem in comparison with other factors such as academic performance and language competence.

Most important, because of historical and cultural differences among ethnic groups, the types of self-beliefs underlying self-esteem differ by ethnicity (Tashakkori, 1992), and the factors underlying self-esteem differ across cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995; Lan, 1992). In an effort to understand better the influential factors of self-esteem among minority adolescents, this article focuses on young people from one ethnic group—Chinese—to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, language competence, and multifaceted domains of self-esteem.

Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Multifaceted Self-Esteem Among Minority Youth

Studies based on social identity theory have illustrated that racism and discrimination affect to some extent the self-esteem of minority youth, especially oppressed groups (Bornman, 1999; Hogg, Abrams, & Patel, 1987). However, the assumption that lower social status or negative stereotypes result in lower self-esteem for ethnic groups has been consistently refuted in several youth studies applying the framework of private domain and public domain traits to examine self-esteem among minority adolescents (Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Tashakkori, 1992). The private domain of self-esteem refers to the global concept of one's worth as a person such as self-satisfaction. The public domain of self-esteem refers to characteristics operative in the public-productive sphere, including scholastic competence, social competence, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct (Turner & Turner, 1982).

Some studies have suggested that race does not have a significant negative effect on global self-esteem, but does seem to have a negative effect on public self-esteem for male minority adolescents (Dukes & Martinez, 1994; Martinez & Dukes, 1991, 1997). That is, in examining the private domain of self-esteem, research suggests that a positive and strong identification with one's ethnic group may enhance global self-esteem (Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). As for the public domain of self-esteem, researchers have argued that ethnic minorities seem to have lower public self-esteem due to institutional racism and social comparisons (Martinez & Dukes; Dukes & Martinez).

These findings have demonstrated the natural complexities of self-concept and self-esteem, particularly for minority groups. Further questions worth investigation are raised. For example, what are the effects of internal and external factors on varying aspects of self-esteem for minority youth? The following two subsections review studies on relationships among ethnic identity, language learning, and self-esteem to explore further minority youth's self-esteem.

Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem

Based on empirical findings linking self-esteem and ethnic groups, it may be necessary to examine the relationship of ethnic identity not only to global self-esteem, but also to other public domain traits such as academic self-esteem and social self-esteem.

A broader definition of ethnic identity is supplied by Isajiw (1975) as "commitment to a social grouping of common ancestry, existing within a larger society of different ancestral origins, and characterized by sharing of some common values, behavioral patterns or symbols different from those of the larger society" (p. 129). Several early studies suggested positive effects of ethnic identity on minority youth's self-esteem, especially the private domain of self-esteem (Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985; Paul & Fischer, 1980).

Some studies have examined self-esteem in terms of a developmental model of ethnic identity. Phinney's (1989) study with grade 10 Black, Asian-, and Mexican-American adolescents found that youth at higher stages of ethnic identity had higher levels of psychological adjustment such as self-evaluation, sense of mastery, family relations, and social relations, as well as of ego development. A similar relationship between ethnic identity search and commitment and self-esteem was found among college students from four ethnic groups, including Asian American, Black, Mexican-American, and White (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Martinez and Dukes (1997) employed Phinney's (1993) stage model of ethnic identity to examine the effect of ethnic identity on various aspects of well-being among Asian, Black, Hispanic, Mixed, Native, and White adolescents. Their study showed that the development of an achieved ethnic identity was strongly related to positive levels of global self-esteem, purpose in life, and academic self-confidence. In addition, for members of ethnic minority groups, ethnic identity was more salient than for members of the dominant group. These studies have suggested that a positive self-concept might be associated with the extent to which people have come to an understanding and acceptance of their ethnicity. In other words, a strong level of ethnic identity is likely to lessen the effect of negative stereotypes and social denigration on the individual by providing a broader frame of reference for the self (Martinez & Dukes).

Other factors may also influence the development of self-esteem, although ethnic identity seems to be a significant predictor of self-esteem for minority adolescents. Rosenberg (1986) stated that global self-esteem was based on reflected appraisals of parents, friends, and teachers for African-American students. Academic performance was another important predictor of global self-esteem (Phinney et al., 1997). For Latino-American adolescents, ethnic identity, sex, grade point average, other-group attitudes, and family relationship were likely to influence their global self-esteem. In addition, factors

associated with acculturation such as language proficiency, educational level, and perceived discrimination might have an effect on global self-esteem of this group (Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994; Portes, Ziady, & Phalachandra, 1999).

Language Learning and Self-Esteem

There is evidence that language learning is highly associated with ethnic identity (Banks, 1994; Helms, 1990; Imbens-Bailey, 1997) and can make a difference in minority students' self-esteem for some ethnic groups (Garrett, Griffiths, James, & Scholfield, 1994; Wright & Taylor, 1995). Knowledge of one's ethnic language may lead to positive attitudes toward one's ethnic community (Ferdman, 1990; Lin, 1998; Saunders, 1988). This involvement in their ethnic background might protect minority students from low self-esteem caused by ethnic denigration and discrimination.

It is also interesting to examine to what extent bilingual proficiency of minority students, who master mainstream English and simultaneously have good command of their ethnic language, influences their evaluation of the private domain and public domain of the self. Findings of some studies in bilingual education have suggested that bilingual children who developed their proficiency in two languages experienced intellectual and academic advantages over monolingual children (Campbell, 1984; Genesee, 1987; Roesingh & Kover, 2003). Moreover, several studies focusing on second-language acquisition and ethnic language learning among Chinese students found that self-confidence with English was positively related to self-esteem and that English proficiency did not necessarily imply cultural assimilation (Lin, 1998; Pak, Dion, & Dion, 1985; Young & Gardner, 1990). It is conceivable that acquisition of the ancestral language alongside a dominant societal language may provide children with greater opportunity to become involved both in their ethnic community and in mainstream society. However, this issue has been underrepresented in the literature.

Because little research explores varied aspects of self-esteem in an ethnic group and the effect of proficiency of mainstream and ethnic languages on minority adolescents' well-being, the current study examines the relationships of ethnic identity, bilingual confidence, and three aspects of self-esteem (global, academic, and social) in a Chinese group in a large Canadian city. Two research questions are addressed.

- Are there relationships between the three aspects of self-esteem and demographics, ethnic identity, and confidence in language proficiency among Chinese youth?
- To what extent do ethnic identity development and confidence in language proficiency influence the three aspects of self-esteem among Chinese youth?

Method

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study adapted several well-established questionnaires and used a 5-point Likert scale to gather information on three aspects of self-esteem, ethnic identity, and confidence in English and Chinese.

Global self-esteem. Ten items were derived from the Rosenberg (1986) Global Self-Esteem Scale. It included both positively and negatively worded items, for

example, "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" and "I feel that I do not have much to be proud of." A global self-esteem score was derived by reversing negative items, summing across 10 items, and obtaining a mean. Thus scores could range from 1 to 5, indicating low to high global self-esteem respectively. This scale has been widely used in other search studies and found to be highly reliable and valid (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney et al., 1997). The Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .77.

Academic self-esteem. Eight items were adapted and revised from the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventories (Battle, 1981). It included both positively and negatively worded items such as "I am proud of my school work" and "I am a failure at school." A high score indicated a positive evaluation regarding school work. The Cronbach's alpha of this study was .75.

Social self-esteem. Seven items were adapted and revised from the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventories (Battle, 1981). It also included both positively and negatively worded items such as "Boys or girls like to play with me" and "Other boys and girls are mean to me." A high score indicated a positive perception of the quality of an individual's relationship with peers. Both scales of academic and social self-esteem have demonstrated reliability and validity (Battle). The Cronbach's alpha of this study was .73.

Ethnic identity. Twelve items were adapted and advised from the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). It included three aspects of ethnic identity: (a) ethnic identity achievement; (b) attitudes toward and a sense of belonging to one's ethnic group; (c) ethnic behaviors and customs. This measure has demonstrated high reliability in earlier studies (Phinney, 1992; Martinez & Dukes, 1997). The Cronbach's alpha in the study was .85.

Self-confidence with language. Respondents were asked to rate their proficiency in English and Chinese in terms of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing respectively. Each score of self-confidence with English and Chinese was derived by summing across four items and obtaining a mean. A high score indicated a high perception of language ability in English or Chinese. The Cronbach's alphas were .91 for English and .83 for Chinese.

Research Procedure

This study was conducted in a weekend Chinese-language school in a city in western Canada. At the time of the study the school had a student population of over 1,300 and offered 86 classes from preschool to grade 12. I administered the survey in English in October 2001 during students' class time. The average time taken was approximately 20 minutes.

Profile of Participants

One hundred, ten students of Chinese ancestry aged 11 to 18 at the Chinese language school were randomly selected, which represented 35% of the population of grade 7 to grade 12 classes. The average age was 14.

The sample was composed of 45 (40.9%) boys and 65 (59.1%) girls. As shown in Table 1, participants' birthplaces included Canada (44.5%), Hong Kong (36.4%), Taiwan (8.2%), China (4.5%), and other (6.4%). Almost 40% of the sample had lived in Canada all their lives; 31.9% had lived in Canada for more than six years; and 28.2% had lived here less than six years. As for self-identification, two thirds of participants perceived their ethnicity with use

Table 1
Profile of Participants

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Birthplace</i>		
Canada	49	44.5
Hong Kong	40	36.4
China	5	4.5
Taiwan	9	8.2
Other	7	6.4
<i>Residence in Canada</i>		
All of life	44	39.9
>= 6 years	35	31.9
< 6 years	31	28.2
<i>Self-Identification</i>		
Canadian	5	4.5
Canadian-Chinese	33	30
Chinese-Canadian	50	45.5
Chinese	18	16.4
Other	4	3.6
<i>Grade Point Average (GPA)</i>		
90-99%	24	21.8
80-89%	54	49.1
70-79%	24	21.8
60-69%	6	5.5
Missing	2	1.8
<i>Education of Parents</i>		
High school or lower	34	30.9
College	15	13.6
University	28	25.5
Graduate school	24	21.8
Do not know	9	8.2

of a hyphen, which was either Chinese-Canadian (45.5%) or Canadian-Chinese (30%). Only 18 (16.4%), five (4.5%), and four (3.6%) of the students identified themselves as Chinese, Canadian, and other respectively.

Fifty-four (49.1%) of the students reported that their grade point averages (GPA) were 80-89%. Twenty-four (21.8%) and 24 (21.8%) of the students reported a GPA of 70-79% and 90-99% respectively, whereas only six (5.5%) students reported their GPA as 60-69%. The highest educational levels of participants' parents were reported as follows: high school or lower 30.9%, college 13.6%, university degree 25.5%, and graduate school 21.8%. Nine students (8.2%) did not know their parents' educational background.

Results

This study used zero-order correlate analysis and multivariate analysis of covariance (MACOVA) to investigate the proposed research questions. Zero-order correlations examined the relationships of the three aspects of self-esteem with demographics, ethnic identity, and confidence in English and Chinese proficiency. A MACOVA investigated the effects of ethnic identity

and confidence in bilingual proficiency on global, academic, and social self-esteem. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the analyses are reported in the following subsections.

Correlations on Three Aspects of Self-Esteem

Relationships between the three aspects of self-esteem and demographic variables, ethnic identity, and confidence in language proficiency were examined by zero-order correlations. Table 2 summarizes the results of the correlations.

Global self-esteem had positive relationships with GPA, years in Canada, confidence with English proficiency, and ethnic identity. The participants who had high academic performance had lived in Canada longer, had high confidence in English proficiency, or were attached strongly to their ethnic group demonstrated high scores of global self-esteem.

Academic self-esteem had a negative relationship with age and positive relationships with GPA, confidence with English proficiency, and ethnic identity. Younger participants had higher scores of academic self-esteem than their older counterparts. Those participants with high academic performance, high confidence with English proficiency, or high attachment to their ethnic group had high scores of academic self-esteem.

Social self-esteem had positive relationships with years in Canada and confidence in English proficiency. Self-identification with ethnicity had a negative relationship with social self-esteem; that is, participants identifying themselves as Chinese had lower scores of social self-esteem than those identifying as Canadian or hyphenated Canadian.

Obviously confidence with English proficiency had greater associations with all of three aspects of self-esteem among the Chinese youth. GPA had moderate relationships with global and academic self-esteem. Sex, parents'

Table 2
Correlations Between Three Aspects of Self-Esteem and Demographics,
Confidence in Language Proficiency, and Ethnic Identity

Variables	Three Aspects of Self-Esteem		
	Global	Academic	Social
<i>Demographics</i>			
Sex	.07	.12	-.04
Age	-.18	-.36**	-.13
GPA	.35**	.41**	.05
Self-identification	-.17	-.15	-.24*
Years in Canada	.20*	.04	.22*
Parents' education	-.05	-.07	.01
Language use in home	.07	.13	.15
<i>Language proficiency</i>			
English	.55**	.41**	.56**
Chinese	.05	.10	-.10
<i>Ethnic identity</i>	.32**	.29**	.07

2-tailed significance: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

education, language use at home, and confidence with Chinese proficiency had no relationships to any of the three aspects of self-esteem.

The Effects of Ethnic Identity and Language Confidence on Three Aspects of Self-Esteem

In order to increase understanding of the effect of ethnic identity and language confidence on the three aspects of self-esteem among the Chinese youth, a two-way MACOVA was used. Based on the findings of bivariate analyses, GPA had relationships with global and academic self-esteem. Thus GPA was treated as a covariate in MACOVA, and then the multivariate test revealed that GPA was an appropriate covariate (Willks' lambda=.78; $F=9.43$; $p<.001$). With controlling for GPA, ethnic identity and bilingual confidence served as independent variables in examining their potential effects on the three aspects of self-esteem.

Before performing MACOVA I categorized the participants into high or low groups in terms of mean splits (above or below the group mean) for three continuous indicators of ethnic identity, confidence in English, and confidence in Chinese. Then a new variable, bilingual confidence, was created to investigate the possible differences of global, academic, and social self-esteem among three groups, including high confidence with both languages, high confidence with either English or Chinese, and low confidence with both languages.

Reviewing Table 3, the two-way MACOVA showed significant effects on the three aspects of self-esteem for ethnic identity (Willks' Lambda=.90; $F=3.53$; $p<.05$) and bilingual confidence (Willks' Lambda=.78; $F=4.50$; $p<.001$). There was no interaction effect between ethnic identity and bilingual confidence.

Table 3
Mean, Standard Deviations, and Univariate Tests
for Three Aspects of Self-Esteem

Variables	Three Aspects of Self-Esteem			
	Global M (SD)	Academic M (SD)	Social M (SD)	
<i>Ethnic Identity</i>				
High	3.92 (.54)	3.99 (.65)	3.80 (.64)	
Low	3.63 (.50)	3.74 (.55)	3.84 (.65)	
<i>Bilingual Confidence</i>				
English and Chinese	4.00 (.49)	4.21 (.52)	4.21 (.63)	
Either English or Chinese	3.79 (.54)	3.83 (.60)	3.74 (.64)	
Neither English nor Chinese	3.43 (.43)	3.55 (.54)	3.60 (.49)	
<i>Univariate Tests</i>				
	df	F	F	F
GPA	1	13.11***	20.96***	0.91
Ethnic Identity	1	6.86**	3.12	0.13
Bilingual Confidence	2	6.59**	7.03***	7.54***
Ethnic Identity x Bilingual Confidence	2	0.32	0.74	0.07

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

Univariate analysis to explore the group differences in ethnic identity showed that significant variation in scores of the three aspects of self-esteem between the high ethnic identity and the low ethnic identity groups was observed only for global self-esteem. As for bilingual confidence, significant differences among the three groups (high confidence with both languages, high confidence with either English or Chinese, and low confidence with both languages) were observed for global, academic, and social self-esteem. The youth with high confidence in both English and Chinese proficiency had much higher scores of global, academic, and social self-esteem than those with low confidence in both English and Chinese proficiency.

Discussion

Relationships of Three Aspects of Self-Esteem

Several interesting patterns for the Chinese youth at the Chinese language school emerge from correlation analyses. First, the significant relationships of GPA with global and academic self-esteem for the Chinese students confirm a research observation that academic achievement could make a contribution to self-esteem when it is seen as an important domain of developmental tasks for adolescents (Abu-Saad, 1999; Harter, 1993). Apparently, academic achievement is important enough to the Chinese adolescents in this study to affect their global and academic self-esteem. It may be attributed to the Chinese culture, which highly values educational credentials and academic success (Lee, 2006; Strawn, 1999).

Second, in this study ethnic identity development influenced Chinese youth's global self-esteem. This finding suggests that Chinese youth with positive feelings about their Chinese membership, knowledge about Chinese culture, and a clear sense of their Chinese background tend to have a higher sense of self-worth than those who do not. This is consistent with earlier self-esteem research concerned with minority adolescents (Bornman, 1999, Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney et al., 1997).

Interestingly, Chinese youth with higher scores of ethnic identity showed a higher perception of their ability to succeed academically. A possible explanation for this finding is the fact that traditional Chinese culture stresses the value of educational achievement and its importance for guaranteeing success in the work force. Recognizing the cultural value of academic achievement may motivate Chinese students to pay more attention to their schoolwork in order to have commendable academic performance.

Third, confidence with English proficiency was significantly related to the three aspects of self-esteem for the Chinese youth. This strongly supports existing research suggestions that self-confidence with English correlates to one's psychological adjustment, satisfaction with self and interpersonal relationships among minority youth (Gil et al., 1994; Pak et al., 1985; Phinney et al., 1997). As members of an ethno-linguistic minority group in Canada, Chinese youth may regard English proficiency as critical because mastering English influences success in schooling and affords access to greater educational opportunities that are pertinent to the validation of self. Mastering the dominant language may provide them with a tool to achieve educational success and to communicate better with majority members. Thus it is not surprising that

Chinese youth with high confidence in English showed a sense of competence in academic ability, peer relationships, and pride in themselves.

There were no significant relationships between the three aspects of self-esteem and self-confidence with Chinese proficiency for the Chinese youth. The finding differs from some suggestions of earlier research that ethnic language learning can enhance minority students' self-esteem (Feuerverger, 1994; Garrett et al., 1994; Wright & Taylor 1995). Sampling bias may account for divergence in results between this study and earlier research. First, the samples of most earlier studies were in programs sanctioned by day schools and integrated into the regular school curriculum; the sample of the present study was obtained from community ethnic language programs. Second, most earlier studies focused on elementary school students, whereas the present study examined junior and senior high school students. Another possible reason for no significant relationship of self-confidence with Chinese on the three aspects of self-esteem is the effect of bilingualism. In Canadian contexts, examining the effect of ethnic language on minority youth's self-esteem should take into account the proficiency of the dominant language. In other words, it may have differences of self-esteem between Chinese adolescents who had fluent literate skills in both English and Chinese and those who had literate skills in only one language. This is discussed further in the following section.

Social self-esteem among the Chinese youth is associated with the length of time living in Canada, ethnic self-identification, and confidence in English proficiency. Participants who had lived all their lives in Canada had a higher perception of interpersonal relationships than students who had lived in Canada for fewer than six years. It is reasonable to assume that new immigrant students have less opportunity to make friends with Canadian students because of language and culture barriers. They may not feel at ease in extending their social activities to the mainstream environment. Thus they probably have a lower perception of the quality of their relationships with peers. As for the youth identifying themselves as Chinese, these appeared to have less confidence in their relationships with peers. The data of this study are unable to support directly a hypothesis that ethnic identification as Chinese may influence students' preference for choosing friends in the Chinese group. Nevertheless, the significant relationships of Chinese youth's social self-esteem with ethnic self-identification and English proficiency reveal some insights about the degree of acculturation and social self-esteem among Chinese youth. Further research is needed to investigate the relationships among the variables discussed above.

Effects of Ethnic Identity and Bilingual Confidence on Self-Esteem

When controlling for GPA, the findings of MACOVA show that ethnic identity influences global self-esteem and that language confidence in both English and Chinese affects the three aspects of self-esteem among Chinese youth.

Ethnic identity positively influences Chinese youth's global self-esteem, which supports a theoretical claim that individuals need a firm sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of well-being. This is also consistent with a number of research findings that positive ethnic identity is an important factor in the well-being of minority youth (Bornman, 1999; Harter, 1993; Lorenzo-Hernandez & Ouellette, 1998; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney et al., 1997).

For the Chinese youth of this study, the significance of ethnic identity to global self-esteem may have resulted from being in a minority situation and feeling the need for group solidarity in Canadian contexts. Because of salient and positive practices in Chinese culture such as food, arts, customs and language, being a member of the Chinese group may provide youth with a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive self-concept.

It appears that bilingual proficiency is a critical factor in global, academic, and social self-esteem for Chinese students at the Chinese language school. Chinese youth with confidence in both English and Chinese evaluated themselves higher on personal worth, academic competence, and interpersonal relationship than those with confidence in only one language or none. It confirms findings of earlier research that proficient bilinguals experienced intellectual, academic, and social advantages over monolingual individuals (Campbell, 1984; Genesee, 1987; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991; Roessingh & Kover, 2003). In Canadian contexts, proficiency in both English and Chinese for Chinese youth is likely to be accompanied by greater feelings of personal efficacy. On the one hand, mastering the dominant language may lead them to achieve educational success and to communicate better with the majority members. On the other hand, mastering their ethnic language may offer another tool in the areas of ethnic identity, social-cultural involvement, and additional employment options. Possibly Chinese youth with high confidence in both English and Chinese proficiency have a more positive self-evaluation, and thus this may encourage them to explore the meaning of their Chinese background in their lives or to question negative stereotypes or the disparaged status of their group in society.

Conclusion

Chinese youth studying their ethnic language at the Chinese language school demonstrate positive self-evaluations in overall self-worth, academic ability, and peer relationships, and reveal fairly assertive attitudes toward their Chinese membership. The current study provides support for the importance of ethnic identity development on global self-esteem and the effect of bilingual proficiency on global, academic, and social self-esteem among Chinese adolescents. These suggest that a sense of belonging, positive attitudes, commitment, and involvement with the Chinese group contribute to a general sense of the self for Chinese-language school students. In addition, bilingual competence increases Chinese youth's private domain and public domain of self-esteem.

The interpretations of this study may be tempered by a number of limitations, primarily due to the nature of the student survey and the sample investigated. The results from a specific group involved in the maintenance of their ethnic language at one weekend Chinese language school may represent a more conventional group of individuals. In particular, the sample appears to be a group of academic achieving students. Moreover, students' language proficiency in Chinese and English is measured by self-reporting information rather than independent language assessments. This is likely to have caused inconsistency with their actual language abilities because of individual differences in self-expectation and self-evaluation. Last, this study lacks information about parental influences on self-esteem and language proficiency such as students' relationships with their parents and parents' support and attitudes

toward language learning. It may have left out some important variables for influencing the development of well-being, ethnic identity, and bilingual proficiency.

In order to understand accurately the relationship among ethnic language maintenance, bilingual competence, self-esteem, and ethnic identity development, further research should include participants from diverse educational settings. Family relationships and parental influences on Chinese youth's ethnic identity retention and self-esteem development remain to be explored in further research because of the importance of parental roles in Chinese culture. It is also recommended that further research take into account the role of actual bilingual proficiency when trying to understand psychological adjustment among members of ethno-linguistic minorities in Canada. It may be valuable for resolving controversial findings about ethnic language learning to investigate the differences of self-esteem development and ethnic identity formation between individuals who have fluent literate skills in two languages and those who have literate skills in only one language.

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