

Education, Ethnic Identity, and Acculturation as Predictors of Self-Esteem in Latino Adolescents

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This study examines the self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity of 150 Latino adolescents enrolled in either a bilingual or traditional education program. Bilingual education programs were established to ensure that academic failure was not the product of limited English proficiency. Grade point average (GPA), acculturation, and ethnic identity significantly predicted self-esteem for students in bilingual programs, whereas only GPA and acculturation significantly predicted self-esteem for students in traditional educational programs.

Ethnic diversity has dramatically increased in the United States over the last several decades. From 1980 to 1992, the Latino population rose from 6.5% to 9.5% and the African American population increased from 11.5% to 11.9% (McLoyd, 1998). By the early 1990s, 1 in every 4 Americans considered themselves African, Asian, Latino, or Native American. Since that time, the demographics of the United States have changed at an impressive rate. In 2004, of the total U.S. population, Hispanics or Latinos made up 14.2%, Black or African Americans made up 12.2%, and Asians made up 3.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Increases in the ethnic and racial population of the United States are expected to continue at an even greater progression.

U.S. school systems have understandably been affected by the consistent increase of ethnically and racially diverse students. One such challenge is the dramatic growth of the number of students with limited English language abilities. It is estimated that 18.7% of the U.S. population older than the age of 5 years speak a language other than English at home, a number that doubled from 1980 to 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005). During the academic year of 2000–2001, approximately 10% of public school students were lacking English proficiency (Morse, 2005). This was an increase of 105% in enrollment since 1990–1991. In addition, the number of public school students in the United States who were classified as limited English proficient (LEP) has nearly doubled from 2.7 million in 1992–1993 to 5 million in 2002–2003 (Morse, 2005).

Latino students are the fastest growing group of students in elementary and secondary schools in the United States (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). In 2003, 40% of all public school students were considered to be part of a minority group (NCES, 2005). This increase from 18% in 1972 is largely due to the growth in the proportion of Latino students. It is also estimated that currently over 19% of all students enrolled in Grades K–12 are Latino (NCES, 2005). Many of these

Latino students speak Spanish and report limited English proficiency. Despite this increase of Latinos in the United States, few studies have focused on self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity of Latino adolescents (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997).

Influenced by the changing demographics, an instructional innovation that was implemented within U.S. school systems was the establishment of bilingual education. As indicated in Teitelbaum and Hiller (1977), the development of bilingual education was greatly affected by the Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). Teitelbaum and Hiller (1977) suggested the *Lau v. Nichols* decision in 1974 “legitimized and gave impetus to the movement for equal educational opportunity for students who do not speak English” by raising “the nation’s consciousness of the need for bilingual education” (p. 139). Currently, the special assistance programs for LEP students within the U.S. public school systems consist of bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL; Ovando, 2003). Bilingual education involves the teaching of school-related material in two languages, English and the primary language spoken by the student. Bilingual education typically lasts for at least 3 years and involves mastery of both the primary language and English. In addition to the instruction of traditional school subjects, bilingual education typically involves the teaching of the student’s ethnic heritage (Young et al., 1984). ESL programs are designed to also assist LEP students in learning social and academic language skills as well as cultural aspects of the English language.

Throughout childhood and adolescence, language is a vital instrument that aids in socialization and emotional, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation (Dale, 1996). It is not uncommon for bilingual individuals with limited proficiency in English skills to be ignored by their English-speaking peers (Rice, Sell, & Hadley, 1991; Tabors, 1997). Worse yet is the notion that bilingual children are often treated “as babies” or spoken to in a condescending fashion because of their limited

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proficiency in English. Thus, it makes sense that instruction in the primary language decreases the disparagement of the language of the minority student and positively influences his or her self-esteem (Alexander & Baker, 1992). As well, instruction about a child's home culture is predicted to assist in the development of a positive attitude toward his or her ethnic background, which in turn improves the child's overall self-concept. Love (1978) hypothesized the following:

If a child's self-concept is consistently eroded by early and continued academic failure, if the language spoken by those he loves most is treated as a second-rate idiom, and if his home culture is denigrated or ignored, the conclusions that child comes to regarding his essential worth may not be positive ones. (p. 17)

Several empirical studies have examined the correlation between self-esteem and bilingual education, but the results are contradictory. Some studies suggest that bilingual education does not affect self-esteem (Curiel, 1979; Fernandez, 1988; Gallegos-Jaramillo, 1985; Moore & Parr, 1978; Torres, 1987), whereas other studies have found a positive relationship between bilingual education and self-esteem (Covey, 1973; Del Buono, 1971; Diaz, 1983; Pesner & Auld, 1980). There appears to be a paucity of current investigations that examine this association between self-esteem and bilingual education.

Two recent studies were identified that examined the link between self-concept and bilingualism. Huang (1995) investigated proficiency in reading and writing in both Spanish and English and the self-esteem of 1,034 eighth-grade Mexican American students. Students self-reported as either biliterate, English monoliterate, Spanish monoliterate, or oral bilingual. The findings indicated that Mexican American children who saw themselves as biliterate reported higher self-confidence than did their monoliterate and oral bilingual counterparts. A similar study examining the relations between identity, interethnic contact, linguistic self-confidence, and psychological adjustment in 179 Chinese undergraduates (ages 17–38 years) registered at Canadian universities correlated greater second-language self-confidence with better psychological adjustment (Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996).

Continued research is necessary to better understand the association between self-esteem and bilingual education. If a student is not enrolled in a bilingual education program, it is likely that he or she is receiving instruction that emphasizes English proficiency and U.S. customs (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). The present study examines the self-esteem, academic achievement, acculturation, and ethnic identity of Latino adolescents enrolled in bilingual education programs compared with Latino adolescents enrolled in traditional education programs. In addition, these variables are examined as potential predictors of self-esteem for Latino adolescents.

Nesdale, Rooney, and Smith (1997) defined *ethnic identity* as the magnitude to which an individual appreciates and actively engages in his or her own cultural values, traditions, beliefs, and behaviors. Phinney (1995) described ethnic identity as being “that part of an individual's self-concept which

derives from knowledge of membership in a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership” (p. 58). During the establishment of one's identity, ethnic heritage is a strong influence. For many individuals, ethnic identity answers one component of the question “Who am I?” and provides a sense of belonging and meaning. Bilingual education includes the assumptions that people who view their ethnic group as favorable and maintain group solidarity can also be expected to have positive feelings about themselves (Phinney, 1998) such that individuals with high levels of ethnic identity, as a result of bilingual education, are expected to have high self-esteem.

Roberts et al. (1999) examined the ethnic identity of 5,423 adolescents from the three largest ethnic groups in the United States (European American, African American, and Mexican American) and found two components: a group membership factor and a developmental factor. The group membership factor is labeled *Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment* (Phinney, 1992). Affirmation of beliefs and belonging are founded from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). “Because people attribute value to the groups they belong to and derive self-esteem from their sense of belonging, ethnic affirmation plays an important role in their self-concept” (Phinney et al., 2001, p. 135).

The second factor of ethnic identity includes a developmental component measuring the extent to which an individual has participated in the process labeled *Ethnic Identity Search*. Phinney (1998) suggested that most adolescents in a minority group examine the meaning of their group membership within a larger society. This process typically involves learning about the history and traditions of their group and confronting such issues as discrimination and prejudice. Phinney et al. (1997) evaluated 669 U.S.-born high school students (372 Latinos, 232 African Americans, and 65 Whites). Ethnic identity was found to be a significant predictor of self-esteem for all groups.

Acculturation is viewed as a process that happens when two autonomous groups are in direct contact with one another and results in changes of the original culture of either or both of the cultures (Redfield, Lenton, & Herskovits, 1936). Typically, this process is used to describe the notion of minority individuals adopting the culture of the dominant group (Garcia-Vasquez, 1995). Although most of the research on acculturation has been conducted on adults, children and adolescents also experience this process. Because acculturation is the process of integrating cultural influences in an adaptive way and adolescents develop their self-esteem in part based on the cultural group they identify with, it makes sense to examine the relationships between self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity and how these variables vary by education programs.

■ Purpose of the Study

The present study examines the relationship between self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity of Latino adolescents enrolled in bilingual education programs compared with Latino

adolescents enrolled in traditional education programs. Phinney et al. (1997) reported that most research on ethnic identity in relation to self-esteem is conducted on African Americans, often in contrast to Caucasians. The researchers explicitly noted that few studies have focused on Latino adolescents with regard to the topics of ethnic identity and self-esteem. In response, the present study used participant groups composed of Latino middle and high school students. The current study adds to Huang's (1995) examination of self-concept and bilingualism by assessing Latino adolescents from various backgrounds and age groups in a bilingual education program and comparing their responses with those of Latino adolescents in a traditional education program.

Research Questions

The research questions were as follows: (a) Are there significant differences in self-esteem, ethnic identity, and acculturation for Latino students between those enrolled in traditional education and bilingual education programs? (b) How well do type of educational program, grade point average (GPA), gender, total number of years lived in the United States, ethnic identity, and acculturation predict self-esteem for both groups of Latino students? (c) Do the significant predictors of self-esteem differ for those Latino students enrolled in the bilingual education program in comparison with Latino students enrolled in a traditional education program? and (d) Does acculturation serve as a mediating variable between ethnic identity and self-esteem?

Method

Participants

The participants were 150 Latino adolescents in Grades 7 through 12 attending middle and high schools in Buffalo, New York; Boston, Massachusetts; and Houston, Texas. A total of 99 participants were enrolled in bilingual education programs, and 51 students were enrolled in traditional education programs. Of the participants, 90 were girls and 60 were boys. Eighty-two percent of the students planned to attend college. Self-report of ethnicity indicated that 37.33% were Puerto Rican, 24.67% were Mexican American, 12% were Colombian, 10% were Dominican American, and 16% were other (e.g., Salvadorian, Guatemalan) with only 21.4% born in the United States. The majority of participants (83%) indicated a GPA of a B or better. Thirty-one participants were in 7th grade, 29 in 8th grade, 35 in 9th grade, 21 in 10th grade, 21 in 11th grade, and 12 in 12th grade. (One student did not indicate his or her grade.) Participants ranged in age from 12 to 19 years ($M = 14.95$, $SD = 1.94$). To participate in the study, adolescents had to have at least one parent born outside of the United States and had to self-identify as Hispanic or Latino. For those participants who were minors, parents signed consent forms prior to data collection in accordance with university policy procedures related to human participants. The measures were administered to the students during school hours. To minimize the impact of limited English proficiency, we read aloud all items to the participants

in English. Instructions were provided in both English and Spanish, and a bilingual interpreter was available during the test administrations to translate items when necessary.

Instruments

Demographic information. The demographic questionnaire included the following: age, place of birth, ethnic group self-identification, gender, self-reported GPA, grade level, and highest grade completed by parents.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1979). The RSE consists of 10 items answered based on a 4-point Likert scale from 4 = *strongly agree* to 1 = *strongly disagree*. The scale was developed to assess adolescent self-esteem in a sample of 5,024 high school students. The internal reliability of the RSE ranges from .72 to .87 (Rosenberg, 1979). In line with the multitrait-multimethod framework set forth by Campbell and Fiske (1959), convergent and discriminant validity of the RSE were assessed by Tippett and Silber (1965). Correlations that were close to zero were found between the RSE and stability of views of other people and stability of perceptual speed (Tippett & Silber, 1965). Additional evidence of good convergent and discriminant validity (Byrne & Shavelson, 1986) as well as good construct validity has been documented in the literature (Coopersmith, 1981). In addition, correlations between the RSE and the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) have been reported as fairly low (0.217) in past studies (Kolotkin & Crosby, 2002). Internal consistency was moderate for the current sample (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). The MEIM consists of 12 items answered based on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*. This self-report instrument was created in 1992 by Jean Phinney and was revised by Roberts et al. (1999) to assess two specific factors of ethnic identity: Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment (7 items) and Ethnic Identity Search (5 items). This measure can be used with participants of any ethnic group, from adolescence through adulthood. According to Phinney et al. (2001), the MEIM has demonstrated good reliability with alpha coefficients greater than .84. For the total score and for each factor, higher scores indicate greater identification with one's ethnic group. Roberts et al. reported positive correlations with measures of psychological well-being and a single item that evaluated the salience of ethnicity, and negative correlations were found with loneliness and depression. No correlations were found between age and ethnic identity, which is not surprising given that the age of participants was fairly young (from Grades 6 to 8). Last, European Americans had the lowest ethnic identity scores in comparison with minority participants. Internal consistency was moderate for this sample (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics–Youth (SASH-Y; Barona & Miller, 1994). The SASH-Y is a 12-item scale with responses given in a 5-point Likert-type scale format selected from the following: (1) *only Spanish*, (2) *Spanish better than English*, (3) *both equally*, (4) *English better than*

Spanish, and (5) *only English*. Three factors of acculturation are measured: Language Use, Media, and Ethnic Social Relations. For the total score and each factor, higher scores indicate greater acculturation to society in the United States. The alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability was .94 for the entire scale (Barona & Miller, 1994). In addition, the SASH-Y differentiated between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites in support of its construct validity (Barona & Miller, 1994). Internal consistency was moderately high for this sample (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

Results

Differences Between Latino Students in Bilingual and Traditional Education Programs on Self-Esteem, Ethnic Identity, and Acculturation

A two-tailed *t* test revealed no significant differences in self-esteem ($t = 1.74, p = .084$) on the RSE between Latino students enrolled in traditional ($M = 19.91, SD = 4.46$) and bilingual ($M = 19.31, SD = 4.76$) education programs.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance revealed statistically significant differences between students in bilingual and traditional education programs in ethnic identity on the MEIM, $F(2, 146) = 3.55, p = .031$. However, there were no significant differences between education programs on the two factors of the MEIM according to follow-up, two-tailed *t* tests: Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment ($t = 1.62, p = .109$) and Ethnic Identity Search ($t = 1.30, p = .198$). Means for the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale were 3.36 ($SD = 0.57$) and 3.52 ($SD = .45$) for bilingual and traditional education students, respectively. For the Ethnic Identity Search subscale, means were 2.82 ($SD = .52$) and 2.73 ($SD = .51$) for bilingual and traditional education students, respectively.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance revealed statistically significant differences between bilingual and traditional education students in acculturation on the SASH-Y, $F(3, 146) = 17.93, p < .0005$. Specifically, there were significant differences between education programs for all three of the following subscales: Language Use ($t = 7.20, p < .0005$), Media ($t = 3.41, p = .001$), and Ethnic Social Relations ($t = 2.04, p = .043$). Specifically, adolescents enrolled in traditional education programs reported significantly higher levels of acculturation in the areas of language use, electronic and printed media, and ethnic social relationships than did adolescents enrolled in bilingual education programs. For bilingual and traditional education students, respectively, for the Language Use subscale, means were 2.16 ($SD = .73$) and 3.01 ($SD = .59$); for the Media subscale, means were 3.48 ($SD = 1.01$) and 4.02 ($SD = .76$); and for the Ethnic Social Relations subscale, means were 1.74 ($SD = .50$) and 1.91 ($SD = .76$).

Predictors of Self-Esteem

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis for both groups of Latino students ($n = 144$) was conducted to examine the relationship of self-esteem (RSE) to GPA, gender, total number of years lived in the United States, the two factors of the

MEIM, and the three factors of the SASH-Y. An equation of three variables accounted for 21.1% of the variance ($R = .46, R^2 = .21$) with GPA ($\beta = 0.26, p = .002$); the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM ($\beta = -0.24, p = .005$); and the Ethnic Social Relations subscale of the SASH-Y ($\beta = -0.29, p = .001$) as significant predictors of the total RSE. These results are presented in Table 1.

A second simultaneous multiple regression analysis for adolescents in bilingual education programs ($n = 93$) was conducted to examine the relationship of self-esteem (RSE) to GPA, gender, total number of years lived in the United States, the two factors of the MEIM, and the three factors of the SASH-Y. A similar equation of three variables accounted for 17.9% of the variance ($R = .42, R^2 = .17$) with GPA ($\beta = 0.27, p = .014$); the Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM ($\beta = -0.25, p = .029$); and the Ethnic Social Relations subscale of the SASH-Y ($\beta = -0.25, p = .046$) as significant predictors of the total RSE. These results are presented in Table 2.

A third simultaneous multiple regression for adolescents in traditional education programs ($n = 51$) was conducted to examine the relationship of self-esteem (RSE) to GPA, gender, total number of years lived in the United States, a total score for the MEIM, and a total score for the SASH-Y. (Total scores were used to reduce the number of variables due to the smaller subsample size.) An equation with two variables accounted for 33% of the variance ($R = .58, R^2 = .33$) with GPA ($\beta = 0.38, p = .004$) and SASH-Y total ($\beta = -0.32, p = .020$) as significant predictors of the total RSE. Results are presented in Table 2.

Does Acculturation Serve as a Mediating Variable Between Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem?

Acculturation (measured by the SASH-Y), as a mediating variable between ethnic identity (measured by the MEIM) and self-esteem (measured by the RSE), was also assessed

TABLE 1
Predictors of Self-Esteem for Both Groups of Latino Students ($n = 144$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Grade point average	0.81	0.25	0.26	3.21	.002
No. of years lived in the United States	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.81	.420
Gender	0.80	0.77	0.09	1.04	.300
Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the MEIM	0.11	0.15	0.06	0.71	.480
Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM	-0.31	0.11	-0.24	-2.88	.005
Language Use subscale of the SASH-Y	0.05	0.65	0.01	0.07	.944
Media subscale of the SASH-Y	0.21	0.43	0.05	0.50	.622
Ethnic Social Relations subscale of the SASH-Y	-2.68	0.80	-0.29	-3.33	.001

Note. MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; SASH-Y = Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics–Youth.

TABLE 2

Predictors of Self-Esteem for Latino Students in Bilingual Education Programs (*n* = 93) and Traditional Education Programs (*n* = 51)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Students in a bilingual education program					
Grade point average	0.77	0.31	0.27	2.51	.014
No. of years lived in the United States	-0.04	0.12	-0.04	-0.32	.752
Gender	1.63	0.96	0.18	1.70	.093
Ethnic Identity Search subscale of the MEIM Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment subscale of the MEIM	0.08	0.19	0.05	0.42	.676
Language Use subscale of the SASH-Y	-0.29	0.13	-0.25	-2.22	.029
Media subscale of the SASH-Y	0.06	0.86	0.01	0.06	.949
Ethnic Social Relations subscale of the SASH-Y	0.58	0.50	0.14	1.16	.251
Students in a traditional education program					
Grade point average	1.59	0.52	0.38	3.04	.004
No. of years lived in the United States	0.31	0.19	0.20	1.62	.113
Gender	-0.33	1.27	-0.03	-0.26	.796
MEIM total	-0.18	0.13	-0.18	-1.39	.172
SASH-Y total	-3.66	1.51	-0.32	-2.42	.020

Note. MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; SASH-Y = Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics–Youth.

in this study. To assess the mediating effects of acculturation, we used a three-step statistical approach outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). A variable was identified as a mediating variable if the regression coefficient was statistically significant in both of the first two regression tests and if it demonstrated a greater significant relationship with the dependent variable in the third regression test. In addition, for the mediating variable to be supported, the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables in the third regression equation had to be less significant than what was demonstrated in the second regression test (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

For the first analysis, three multiple regression equations were calculated: (a) regression of the mediator (acculturation) on the independent variable (ethnic identity), (b) regression of the dependent variable (self-esteem) on the independent variable (ethnic identity), and (c) regression of the dependent variable (self-esteem) on both the independent (ethnic identity) and the mediator (acculturation) variables (see Table 3). The first analysis regressed acculturation on ethnic identity, which resulted in a nonsignificant beta coefficient ($\beta = -.07$, $p = .380$). Because the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity was not significant, according to the criteria set forth by Baron and Kenny (1986), analysis does not continue and acculturation does not mediate the relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity.

TABLE 3

Results of Regression Analyses Assessing Acculturation as a Mediating Variable Between Self-Esteem and Ethnic Identity

Regression Equation	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Acculturation with ethnic identity	-0.07	-0.88	.380
Self-esteem with ethnic identity	0.23	2.86	.005
Self-esteem with ethnic identity and acculturation	-0.12	-1.47	.144

Discussion

Previous findings evaluating the association between self-esteem and bilingual education have been contradictory (Covey, 1973; Curiel, 1979; Del Buono, 1971; Diaz, 1983; Fernandez, 1988; Gallegos-Jaramillo, 1985; Moore & Parr, 1978; Pesner & Auld, 1980; Torres, 1987). More recent studies (Huang 1995; Noels et al., 1996) that have examined these associations are limited because the impact on only a few ethnic groups has been assessed. It has been suggested that bilingual children have more access to their culture and therefore experience more opportunities to be acculturated to their ethnic group (Imbens-Bailey, 1996). In view of these factors, it was hypothesized that Latino students in a traditional education program would report higher levels of acculturation. Latino adolescents in a traditional education program were more acculturated than were Latino adolescents in a bilingual education program with regard to language usage. Additionally, Latino adolescents in bilingual education programs reported levels of self-esteem and ethnic identity similar to those for Latino adolescents in traditional education programs.

The finding of no significant difference between the two groups in the two ethnic identity factors is surprising. Future research may provide better understanding of the extent to which the association between language and ethnic identity is maintained. It may also be important to assess the content of bilingual programs and what extent the primary language is used and how much information is given about students' home cultures. There may be much more diversity in bilingual programs than is being acknowledged. At least one school assessed in this study had students from more than 25 countries in the bilingual education program; thus, the content of this program was probably significantly different from the content of a program that had students from only a few countries who may have also all spoken the same language.

Previous research (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990; Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992; Phinney et al., 2001) had found associations between language usage, ethnic identity, and acculturation. Researchers have considered language use to be an important link to an individual's culture in that it helps to maintain ethnic participation and provides increased access to the ethnic community. The current study supports this idea in that Latino adolescents in a bilingual education program scored lower on the SASH-Y subscales of Language

Use, Media, and Ethnic Social Relations, indicating these adolescents had more preference for usage of their primary language in a variety of contexts than did Latino adolescents in a traditional education program.

Additional research conducted by Phinney et al. (1997) reported that ethnic identity was a significant predictor of self-esteem for African American, Latino, and White adolescents. GPA; number of years living in the United States; and Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment scores together significantly predicted self-esteem for students in bilingual education programs, whereas total acculturation and GPA were significant predictors for students in traditional education programs. Furthermore, acculturation was hypothesized to be a mediating variable between ethnic identity and self-esteem and type of education program as a mediating variable between acculturation and self-esteem. This hypothesis was not supported.

Several explanations can be suggested for these results. Ethnic identity is a significant predictor for bilingual education students but not for traditional education students. This may be the result of an opportunity (or lack thereof) to build group solidarity. It is possible that students in a bilingual education program spend increased amounts of time with other students from similar backgrounds in comparison with those students in a traditional education program. This difference in settings may provide or inhibit opportunities for group unity. Past research has found that a diminishment of ethnic identity may occur as Latinos acculturate into the Anglo or mainstream culture (Cuéllar, Nyberg, Maldonado, & Roberts, 1997). Important components associated with ethnic identity, such as one's sense of affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors, can weaken with acculturation. For these reasons, it would be helpful to continue to explore the specifics of what happens in bilingual education programs because the structure and content may affect the relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity for Latino adolescents. It would also be interesting to look at this relationship for adolescents of other cultures to see if these findings are replicated.

All participant responses were collected through a similar method that consisted of self-report measures. This procedure does bring into question the influence of method variance. Despite this possibility, we found that specific aspects of ethnic identity (affirmation, belonging, and commitment) and acculturation (ethnic social relations) significantly contributed to the self-esteem of Latinos students in a bilingual program. These findings demonstrate an important and significant variation between bilingual and traditional education participant responses that ultimately occurred in an explainable direction. As well, our findings are congruent with past studies that support the theoretical and empirical validity of acculturation and ethnic identity and conclude that although these constructs are highly related, both acculturation and ethnic identity are distinct processes that can be reliably measured (Cuéllar et al., 1997).

The other significant predictor of self-esteem for all Latino students included GPA. The association between academic

achievement and self-esteem has received a fair amount of empirical investigation. When academic achievement is considered an important domain, it is likely to influence an individual's well-being (Harter, 1993). As a result of the findings, one can infer that school success was important for the Latino students regardless of type of education program. Future research evaluating other variables that contribute to self-esteem in relation to the ones assessed in the present study will help to improve counselors' understanding of the specific variables that underlie self-esteem for Latino adolescents.

Past examinations of ethnic identity and acculturation have made comparisons between Latinos and other ethnic groups. The present study is the first of its kind to assess these constructs within Latino adolescents in contrasting educational programs where exposure to cultural influences may vary considerably. Although ethnic identity did not differ between these two groups, our findings did demonstrate distinct predictive abilities among the ethnic identity factors. The finding of Affirmation, Belonging, and Commitment as a significant predictor of self-esteem lends support to Phinney's (1998) model, which emphasizes the association between ethnic identity and self-esteem. However, we did not find Ethnic Identity Search to be a significant predictor of self-esteem. Such findings demonstrate the complexity of the ethnocultural variables as predictors of self-esteem. Continued research is needed to better understand the impact of such constructs as they contribute to self-esteem between ethnic groups and within subgroups.

It is important to address the limitations of this present study when assessing its contribution to the current literature. One limitation of the study was that no information was gathered regarding the reasons that some students were enrolled in the bilingual education program while others were enrolled in the traditional education program. In other words, we do not know if parents selected the education program for their child or if the student was referred into a bilingual program by a school representative. Future research should examine the impact of the referral source on the variables investigated in the current study.

We used a self-report data-collection technique that relies on the truthfulness of each participant and facilitates the potential introduction of a social desirability response set. The distribution of scores may have been affected by participants' inclination to respond positively to survey items that request an opinion toward their ethnicity (i.e., affirmation). In that same regard, participants may have felt uncomfortable reporting negative attitudes and opinions about their ethnicity. Such tendencies ought to be considered when interpreting our results.

All of the students who participated in the present study identified themselves as a member of the Latino ethnic group. Because other ethnic and racial groups were not assessed, another limitation of the present study is that the results are not generalizable to other ethnic or racial groups. Future

studies should focus on other ethnic groups to replicate and extend the findings.

Neither causal directionality nor the potential long-term effects of bilingual education on self-esteem can be inferred without longitudinal data. The use of a cross-sectional design in the current study is a serious limitation that needs to be addressed.

The psychological and policy-related implications of the current study are several and important despite the limitations of the present study. This investigation contributes to a relatively outdated and scarce literature that examines self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity among Latino adolescents. This study also begins to focus on the need for researchers' improved knowledge of education experiences and adjustment among ethnically diverse populations. The current study takes a significant step in assessing a relevant topic among a largely neglected research population.

Last, the findings of this study prompt several implications for counselors working with adolescents in a school system or clinical setting. Our findings suggest that ethnicity can play an important role in influencing Latino adolescents' self-esteem. Thus, it makes sense for counselors to consider incorporating the enhancement of ethnic identity development when working with Latino adolescents. Counselors may opt to conduct a formal assessment of an individual's ethnic identity in order to determine the specific area of ethnicity to focus on. For example, individuals who endorse a desire to learn about their ethnicity may benefit from increased opportunities to explore their ethnic background through attendance at community events or field trips to cultural settings aimed at increasing their knowledge base. Furthermore, counselors should anticipate encounters with Latino adolescents who express a disinterest in exploring their ethnic background. In these instances, counselors may adopt a psychoeducational stance in which the benefits of ethnic exploration are emphasized as an element of their clinical work.

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