

ETHNIC/CULTURAL IDENTITY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  
ACROSS GENERATIONS

BY

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for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Psychology  
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ETHNIC/CULTURAL IDENTITY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF-ESTEEM AND  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS GENERATIONS

BY

RATNA DAS

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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## Abstract

Ethnic/cultural identity is defined as the acknowledgement of one's membership in an ethnic or cultural group together with the emotional significance attached to that acknowledgement. The emotional reaction attached to the acknowledgement of ethno-cultural background can be such that subjects display a high magnitude of cultural acceptance and pride, or conversely that subjects display high amounts of denial and rejection of their cultural or ethnic background. Many studies have suggested that ethnic/cultural identity is an important variable that affects psychological functioning (e.g., Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990; Whyche & Rotheram-Borus, 1990). The present study hypothesized that positive ethnic/cultural identity is associated with higher self-esteem and academic functioning than negative identity. These relationships were also expected to be stronger for participants that are new immigrants than

for second or later generation participants. Undergraduate psychology students completed questionnaires assessing the independent variables of ethnic/cultural identity and generational level and the dependent variables of self-esteem, perceived GPA, and academic self-concept. MANOVAs analyzed the relationships among these variables for Canadian, White, European, and Asian participants. Correlations were also computed between all variables in the study. Results of this study did not support the hypotheses. Significant findings were confined to the White group, which showed that higher self-esteem scores were related to lower ethnic/cultural identity scores and that this relationship increased as generational level increased. These findings are explained as due to participant rejection of (a) their own ethnic roots in favor of fitting into Canadian culture or (b) their rejection of acculturation into Canadian culture (with either rejection decreasing in later generations).

Limitations of this study and future research suggestions are also discussed.



Ethnic/Cultural Identity: Implications for  
Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement  
Across Generations

All individuals have an ethno-cultural background. When that background is recognized and evokes an emotional reaction, they have developed an ethnic/cultural identity (Tajfel, 1981). Many studies have suggested that an ethnic/cultural identity may be an important variable that affects psychological functioning such as self-esteem and academic functioning. The present study will specifically examine the relationships between ethnic/cultural identity and both self-esteem and academic functioning. The influence of generational differences on these relationships will also be examined. An answer to this investigation will yield valuable information for cross-cultural and ethnic identity research because no previous studies exist (to the researcher's knowledge) that have examined together the variables of

ethnic/cultural identity, generational status, self-esteem, and academic functioning. The present study should also provide much needed information regarding the plausibility of using undergraduate university subjects for cross-cultural and ethnic identity research.

#### Ethnic/Cultural Identity

Self-identity has been generally conceptualized as the sense of knowing who one is, or as the existence of a set of self-images (Aboud, 1981; Adler, 1977; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1976; Hauser, 1972). Self-identity is encompassed by a broad range of component constructs, each of which play a different role of significance within the psychological repertoire of an individual. The consideration of one's ethnic or cultural background, referred to as the ethnic/cultural identity, is one such construct (Dashefsky, 1972; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1976).

Gordon's (1964, 1976) definition of an ethnic group is one of the more useful and widely used definitions within the area of cultural research. According to Gordon (1976), a group of persons who identify with each other based upon similar physical, religious, or historical origin features constitutes an ethnic group. Specifically, he states:

I use the term 'ethnic group', then, to refer to ... any group which is defined or set off by race, religion, or national origin, or some combination of these categories.... All of these categories have a common social psychological referent in that all of them serve to create, through historical circumstances, a sense of peoplehood for groups ... and this common referent of peoplehood is recognized in the ... public's useage of these three terms, frequently in interchangeable fashion. (p. 33)

As Gordon (1976) explains, the terms culture and ethnic group have been used interchangeably in the literature. Both terms will similarly be used to refer to the same variable of background in the present study.

A majority of researchers agree that an ethnic or cultural identity includes the subjective aspect of a personal attachment or identification with a (cultural) reference group (Adler, 1977; Dashefsky, 1972; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1976; Driedger, 1978; Gordon, 1976; Mackie & Brinkerhoff, 1984; Maldonado, 1975). For example, Dashefsky and Shapiro (1976) suggest that, "ethnic group identification occurs when the group in question is one with whom the individual believes he has a common ancestry based on shared individual characteristics and/or shared sociocultural experiences" (p. 8). Other researchers have acknowledged that ethnic-identification also involves an objective component in that the individual is recognized and labelled by others as being affiliated

with an ethnic or cultural group (Aboud, 1981; Barth, 1969; Isajiw, 1985; Svensson, 1985). Isajiw (1985) explains that "ethnicity refers to: an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or to descendants of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group." Finally, some authors (e.g., Dashefsky, 1972; Dashefsky & Shapiro, 1976; Rose & Rose, 1965) stipulate that ethnic identity involves an emotional evaluation in addition to the subjective or objective recognition of membership in a cultural group. Phinney (1992) states that:

ethnic identity is an aspect of a person's social identity that has been defined by Tajfel (1981) as that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (p. 156)

It follows, therefore, that ethnic or cultural identity can be defined as the acknowledgement of one's membership in an ethnic or cultural group as well as the emotional value and significance attached to the acknowledgement (Phinney, 1992; Tajfel, 1981). It is recognized for the present thesis that emotional significance may be such that subjects display a high magnitude of cultural acceptance and pride, or the converse, where subjects may indicate high amounts of denial and rejection of their cultural or ethnic background.

There are a number of reasons why the study of ethnic identity is important. First, all persons, whether they are aware of it or not, come from some sort of, or a mix of cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, one's racial background cannot be altered, and must therefore be accepted in some fashion before the best level of psychological health can be attained (Newman, 1976). This is true especially for members of

visible minorities, as racial characteristics make it virtually impossible for this aspect of their identity to be left unexamined (Proshansky & Newton, 1968).

Thus, given the undeniability of cultural background and ethnicity, researchers have suggested that the acknowledgement and acceptance of these features is conducive to better mental health (Allport, 1976; Proshansky & Newton, 1968; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990).

#### Development of Ethnic/Cultural Identity

A wealth of research has been conducted with children and adolescent subjects in order to explore the developmental aspects of ethnic/cultural identity. Proshansky and Newton (1968) point out that children have been found to show awareness of racial differences by the early ages of three to four. It has further been found that generally between the ages of five and nine children are able to identify themselves and others according to ethnicity or culture (Allport, 1976;

Proshansky & Newton, 1968; Rice, Ruiz & Padilla, 1976; Ward & Braun, 1972). Finally, researchers generally believe that adolescence is the time when persons, especially minority youth, are required to confront and resolve difficulties regarding ethnic background.

Kurt Lewin (1948) was one of the first researchers to recognize that one's cultural and ethnic background could play an important role in the psychological development of an individual. According to Lewin's theory of identification, an individual's sense of well-being depends upon the ability to find a secure ground upon which one's life can be based. Strong and clear identification with one's heritage and culture is in turn necessary if that sense of secure ground is to be developed. Lewin (1948) stated that, "one of the most important constituents of the ground on which the individual stands is the social group to which he 'belongs'" (p. 145).



Another influential theorist who recognized and considered the impact of ethnicity and culture on the self-identification process was Erik Erikson. Erikson (1968) believed that during adolescence, individuals must establish a sense of self-value and achieve an identity. Erikson (1956) suggested that during identity development, one falls within one of four ego identity statuses. (a) Persons falling in the status of identity diffusion display no commitments regarding occupation or ideology. (b) When individuals have reached a firm ideological and occupational commitment, but have done so without resolving a crisis or have done so due to parental example, they fall within the status of foreclosure. (c) If individuals are actively engaged in the identity search but have not yet made firm commitments, they are given the status of moratorium. (d) Finally, persons falling within the identity achievement status are said to have resolved a crisis period and are now committed to a firm ideological and

occupational identity. Like Lewin, Erikson also proposed that the exploration of ethnic background was essential for the development of a healthy identity, especially for minority youth. According to Erikson's theory the process of accepting one's ethnicity and developing a sense of self-value involves identification with one's cultural history and ethnic group members (Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990; Young & Bagley, 1982).

More recently, Phinney and colleagues have formulated a comprehensive model of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990; Phinney & Tarver, 1988). According to this model, there are three stages leading toward the development of a secure ethnic identity. (a) The first and least developed stage is one of "ethnic identity diffusion/foreclosure." Here ethnicity is not regarded as being an issue and is left unexplored, or as in the case of foreclosure, self-

opinion regarding ethnicity is based upon the opinions (often negative) of the majority culture. (b) "Ethnic identity search/moratorium" is proposed to be the next stage in the development of an ethnic identity. During this stage individuals become aware of their ethnicity and are engaged in an active ethnic identity search which is known as a moratorium as it is characterized by an ongoing search without commitment. Individuals in this stage have been found to express a desire to learn more about their culture, and to understand the implications of their own ethnic status (Cross, 1978; Phinney, 1989). (c) When individuals have finally resolved questions concerning their ethnicity and have made a commitment that enables them to accept themselves as being a member of a cultural group, they are said to have reached the stage of "ethnic identity achievement." Phinney, Lochner & Murphy (1990) state "in the area of ethnicity, identity achievement

corresponds to acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity" (p. 67).

#### Quality of Ethnic/Cultural Identity

Ethnic/cultural identification, as defined for the present thesis, involves an emotional reaction attached to recognition of one's membership within a cultural group. This emotional reaction may constitute high amounts of pride and acceptance of ethno-cultural background, thereby giving the acknowledgement a positive quality (this characterizes a positive ethnic/cultural identity). Or, the emotional reaction may be of a negative quality where it involves a significant amount of denial and rejection of ethno-cultural background (this characterizes a negative ethnic/cultural identity).

#### Healthy Consequences of a Positive Ethnic/Cultural Identity

In general, research has been suggestive of the fact that a positive ethnic/cultural identity is

related to good mental health (e.g., Berlin, 1987; Chafes & Coney, 1990; Which & Rotheram-Borus, 1990). Many researchers believe that by adolescence, especially for minority youth, the acceptance of ethnic background through the confrontation and resolution of difficulties regarding ethnicity is a necessary prerequisite for the development of a healthy adult personality (Arce, 1981; Baldwin, 1979; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Maldonado, 1975; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). Similarly, Lewin believed that acceptance and identification with one's culture and peoples enhanced the ultimate development of a healthy global self-identity (Akoodie, 1984; Driedger, 1976, 1978; Lewin, 1948). Lewin explains that:

to counteract fear and make the individual strong to face whatever the future holds, there is nothing so important as a clear and fully accepted belonging to a group ... a strong feeling of being part and parcel of the group and having a positive

attitude toward it is, for children and adults alike, the sufficient condition for the avoidance of attitudes based on self-hatred. (p. 198)

According to Erikson's theory of identity development, persons who have reached the stage of identity achievement also possess the highest level of ego identity. Erikson (1956) believed that ideological commitment to an ethnic identity which results in a high level of ego identity is:

a necessity for the growing ego which is involved in the succession of generations, and in adolescence is committed to some new synthesis of past and future; a synthesis which must include but transcend the past, even as identity does. (p. 97)

This "synthesis of past and future" can be interpreted as the process by which concerns regarding one's cultural background and heritage are confronted and resolved. This, in turn, allows for the formation of an

ethnic identity which is healthy. Therefore, it can be said that individuals who have healthy ethnic self-identities because they have acknowledged and accepted their background, will have higher levels of ego identity. Furthermore, Marcia has found empirical support for Erikson's (1956, 1968) theory of identity formation. These studies have revealed, for example, that subjects who had reached the stage of identity achievement where ethnic identity had been explored and accepted, or the stage of moratorium where ethnicity was still being actively explored performed concept attainment tasks better under stress than subjects who had not explored or resolved their background (Marcia, 1966, 1967). In addition, Marcia (1966, 1967) has found that identity achievement and moratorium subjects were less open to self-esteem manipulation than subjects falling within stages where ethnic identity had not been explored or had been rejected.

Explorations of Phinney's recent model of ethnic identity development also provide evidence for the view that a positive ethnic/cultural identity is related to indicators of good mental health. For example, individuals with an achieved ethnic identity - those who have resolved concerns regarding their ethnicity and are now committed to and accepting of their ethnic background, have been found to be more comfortable and secure in their global identity (Cross, 1978; Kim, 1981). Other studies examining subjects who fall within the ethnic identity achievement stage have revealed that these subjects have generally better psychological adjustment than subjects in the two less developed stages of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). Furthermore, these individuals have specifically been found to have the highest levels of self-esteem (Kim, 1981; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Results of investigations on the psychological adjustment of individuals in the less developed stage of active



search without commitment known as the ethnic identity search/moratorium stage have been mixed. Some studies have found self-esteem is only slightly higher than in the least developed stage of ethnic identity diffusion/foreclosure (Phinney, 1989), while other researchers have found a significantly higher level of self-esteem for subjects engaged in ethnic identity search (Parham & Helms, 1985). Thus, these studies reveal that an increase in the level of mental health and psychological functioning seems to occur as the acceptance of ethno-cultural background increases.

Finally, the area of acculturation provides another source of information which points to the importance of a positive ethnic/cultural identity. Berry and Kim (1988) explain that "acculturation is a term that has been defined as culture change that results from continuous, firsthand contact between two distinct cultural groups" (p. 207). According to Berry and his colleagues one possible mode of acculturation

is called integration (e.g., Berry, 1990; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Berry, Wintrob, Sindell & Mawhinney, 1981). Individuals and groups who feel that the maintenance of cultural identity and characteristics is important and who also feel that it is important to maintain a relationship with other groups, particularly the dominant majority, are said to be undergoing "integration." The acculturation literature suggests that integration, which involves the acceptance of ethno-cultural background, is the most healthy of the acculturation modes (e.g., Berry, Wintrob, Sindell & Mawhinney, 1981; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). For example, numerous investigations have found that individuals display the lowest levels of stress if they fall in the integration mode of acculturation (Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Berry, Wintrob, Sindell & Mawhinney, 1981). Integration has also been correlated with lower feelings of isolation, high positive adjustment, high

degrees of community involvement and better cognitive control (Berry, Wintrob, Sindell & Mawhinney, 1981; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). So it is shown that studies on acculturation have revealed that the maintenance of ethnic/cultural identity which allows for the development of a positive ethnic/cultural identity is conducive to good mental health.

#### Unhealthy Consequences of a Negative Ethnic/Cultural Identity

Lewin felt that a rejection of one's cultural and ethnic background, or ethnic "self-hatred," would lead to negative psychological consequences such as feelings of inferiority, personal disorganization and a loss of identity (Akoodie, 1984). Also, evidence found within the ethnic identity literature shows that a negative ethnic/cultural identity may be related to poor mental health (e.g., Akoodie, 1984; Parker & Kleiner, 1965; Proshansky & Newton, 1968).

Erikson (1956) proposed that identity diffusion individuals, who are individuals lacking an acceptance or commitment regarding their ethnic identity, possess the lowest amount of ego identity and therefore have poor mental health. In empirical tests of Erikson's theory, Marcia (1966, 1967) found that foreclosure and identity diffusion subjects performed poorly under stress, set unrealistic goals, and had authoritarian values. Later studies by other researchers have also supported the fact that there is a link between the low level of ego identity found in stages of ethnic identity associated with low commitment and non-acceptance of ethno-cultural background and poor mental health (Waterman, 1984). For example, Bunt (1968) found that subjects low in ego identity felt more misperceived by others than subjects with high ego identities. Adams and Shea (1978) report that individuals with low ego identities feel less in control of events compared to subjects with higher ego

identities. Subjects low in ego identity have also been found to be more susceptible to peer pressure and more likely to use illegal drugs (Adams, Ryan, Hoffman, Dobson, & Neilsen, 1985; Jones & Hartman, cited in Phinney, Lochner, & Murphy, 1990).

Studies examining Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development provide more evidence of a link between low or non-acceptance of ethno-cultural background and poor mental health. Subjects falling in the ethnic identity diffusion/foreclosure stage, where ethnicity is unexplored or a negative ethnic/cultural identity is developed, have been found to display indicators of poor psychological adjustment such as low scores on measures of social, peer and family relations and mastery (Phinney, 1989). A number of studies have also found that individuals with a diffused or foreclosed ethnic identity have lower levels of self-esteem (Cross, 1978; Parham & Helms, 1985; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, Lochner &

Murphy, 1990). Finally, researchers have found that this stage of ethnicity and cultural background exploration is typically associated with feelings of shame and denial (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1983; Cross, 1978; Kim, 1981; Parham & Helms, 1985).

Acculturation research also provides more evidence for the suggestion that a negative ethnic/cultural identity may contribute to poor mental health. Persons who are undergoing the acculturation process may rest within the mode of "marginalization." This mode is characterized by feelings that neither the maintenance of cultural identity and characteristics, nor a relationship with other groups in society is important. The marginalization option, which involves a rejection of cultural identity has been found to create the least healthy conditions for acculturating individuals (Berry & Kim, 1988; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). In contrast to integration, marginalization is associated with the highest levels of acculturative stress (Berry

& Kim, 1988; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). Phinney, Lochner and Murphy (1990) also report that persons who are marginalized have been found to display higher rates of alcoholism, antisocial behavior, mental illness and suicide, and possess lower levels of self-esteem and educational achievement. Therefore, it seems that the rejection of ethnicity and culture which occurs when persons are marginalized can have negative consequences on psychological functioning.

Thus, the theoretical and empirical literature have established that during the course of the self-identification process, one's problems regarding their cultural and/or ethnic background must be examined and resolved (e.g. Akoodie, 1984; Erikson, 1956, 1968; Kim, 1981; Lewin, 1948; Marcia, 1966, 1967; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Finally, and most significantly, theoreticians of culture and ethnicity have agreed that the acceptance of one's ethnic identity is a necessary

requirement for the good mental health of individuals, and that rejection and denial of ethnic identity can result in negative consequences for mental health.

The Influence of Generation on Ethnic/Cultural Identity

There is a fair amount of evidence which suggests that the salience of ethno-cultural background decreases with the succession of new generations. In other words, ethnic persons who are born in the adopted country generally are not as strongly identified with their ethno-cultural background as are their immigrant parents. For example, Pierce, Clark and Kaufman (1978) and Pierce, Clark and Kiefer (1972) studied three generations of Mexican and Japanese Americans and found that while new immigrants did assimilate somewhat to the host country, they were also still much more attentive to their culture of origin and their ethno-cultural background was of much more cognitive importance to them than to the succeeding generations. Other studies have found similar generational



differences regarding the salience or impact of ethnic/cultural identity. Lalonde and Cameron (1993) reported that Caribbean, Chinese, Greek and Italian immigrant parents had significantly higher scores on ethnic identification than the generation of their children. Also, Boski (1991) has found that among Polish immigrants, new immigrants scored highest on a measure tapping the relevance of Polish symbols, while second generation subjects applied the lowest relevance to Polish symbols. Old immigrants, those who had been settled for a longer time than the new immigrants scored at an intermediate level between the new immigrants and the second generation. In addition the relevance of the Canadian culture showed a significant linear increase with new immigrants scoring lowest, followed by old immigrants and the second generation subjects responding with the highest score. Finally, in their study of Greek Americans, Constantinou and Harvey (1985) report a slightly different pattern of

generational differences. They found that first generation subjects score more positively on indicators of ethnic identification than the second generation, however, the third generation respondents yielded scores that were higher than those of the second generation thereby suggesting a pattern of revival of the salience of ethnic identity after three generations. Thus, these studies illustrate the general phenomenon of increasing assimilation and a concurrent decrease in the salience of ethnic/cultural identity with the succession of ethnic generations.

Although there seems to be a decrease in the relevance of ethnic/cultural identity with each generation, some aspects of identification with the land of origin remain intact. Yao (1979) for example, found that her sample of contemporary Chinese Americans reported that their ethno-cultural traditions and language were still important parts of their lives. In Boski's (1991) study of Polish Canadians, it was

revealed that the decrease in significance of Polish symbols for the older immigrants and the second generation was much smaller than the reported increase in significance of Canadian symbols. Other researchers report that Chinese Americans and Chinese Australians were found to have undergone assimilation to their host cultures, however some aspects of traditional Chinese culture, particularly family life, were maintained (Rosenthal & Feldman (1990). Finally, Constantinou and Harvey (1985) concluded from their study of three generations of Greek Americans that "overall, the pattern is one of decreasing involvement;... although there is a decline in ethnic identification, assimilation is not complete, even by the third generation" (p. 249). Thus, it is concluded that for persons in generations beyond that of the original immigrants, the quality of ethnic/cultural identity may still be an important factor for the quality of their psychological functioning and mental health. However,

because the salience of the ethnic/cultural identity may have decreased, the link between ethnic/cultural identity and psychological functioning may not be as strong for later generations as it is for older generations.

#### Ethnic/Cultural Identity and Self-Esteem

Given the theory and research as discussed above, it can be suspected that the quality of the ethnic identity (i.e., positive or negative) will correlate with specific indicators of an individual's psychological functioning. One such correlate which has been extensively researched is self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as being:

the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a

personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed  
in the attitudes the individual holds. (p. 4)

For the purposes of this paper, studies where an evaluation of self-concept is mentioned will be interpreted as having looked at self-esteem. This can be supported using Coopersmith's (1967) definition of self-esteem as he states that, "self-concept is the symbol or image which the person has formed out of his personal experiences while self-esteem is the person's evaluation of that image" (p. 4). It follows, therefore, that a positive self-concept would indicate high or good self-esteem, while a negative self-concept would indicate low or poor self-esteem.

Phinney (1992) has found that there is a significant positive correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem using high school and college samples in the United States. Other research which suggests that there may be a link between ethnic and cultural background acceptance and the quality of self-

esteem has been conducted with a variety of populations and for a number of different research examinations. Research conducted with Native Indian subjects has generally revealed that individuals who are comfortable with their Native heritage feel better about themselves and display higher levels of self-esteem. For example, Trimble (1975) found that Native Indians who tended to have high regard for themselves and their culture also scored highly on a measure of self-esteem. Similar results were later obtained again by Trimble (1987) who found that Native Indian subjects who felt themselves to be of worth and were satisfied with their ethnicity also had positive self-esteem scores. Furthermore, low self-esteem has been found to be directly related to non-acceptance of ethnicity, or specifically, to role and identity conflict concerning Indianness (Lefley, 1982). Finally, interview and field research studies have been conducted to determine what impact outside or dominant culture influences may have before, during,

and after intervention on groups of people who live traditionally and as separate from the dominant society. These researchers have found that the loss or disintegration of traditional tribal traditions and culture has lead to decreased levels of self-esteem (Bennet, 1985; Lefley, 1974, 1976, 1982).

Studies examining the self-esteem of other visible minority groups have been conducted primarily in the United States. A number of earlier studies have been conducted with Black children who were asked to indicate preference for play with white or black dolls. These studies have typically found that Black children who indicated more black color preferences also scored higher on self-esteem scores (e.g. Hraba & Grant, 1970; Ward & Braun, 1972). In a subsequent investigation, Rice, Ruiz and Padilla (1976) asked Black and Chicano school children to indicate who they would most like to grow up to be like using photographs of an Anglo male, a Black male, and a Chicano male. It was found that a

significant number of the Black subjects indicated that they would prefer to be like the Anglo photograph, while the Chicano subjects indicated that they would most like to be like the Chicano photograph when they grew up. The researchers here state that their results indicate that the Black students show a lack of self-esteem and racial pride, while the Chicano students display high self-esteem and strong ethnic group pride. The presence of a supportive environment, where ethnic group pride can be established and nurtured also seems to have an effect on the self-esteem of visible minority group members. Several studies have found that Black students in schools where the majority of students are also black and where there is a supportive and homogenous environment have better self-concepts and higher self-esteem (Gibbs, 1990; Powell & Fuller, 1970, cited in Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). In the mid-sixties, researchers found more evidence of a link between ethnic identity and self-esteem in school



children. Georgeoff (1967), Roth (1969), and Ward and Braun (1972) found that the introduction of Black studies classes resulted in an increase in racial pride, which in turn was found to directly result in an increase in positive self-concept. Other studies have shown that simply acceptance of one's ethnic background, and freedom to express one's culture without being exposed to derogatory comparisons with the majority, are conducive to the maintenance of self-esteem (Rovner, 1981; Tajfel, 1978; Wyche & Rotheram-Borus, 1990). Furthermore, some researchers have posited that the emergence of "Black pride" in response to racism and discrimination in North America has fostered increased ethnic self-acceptance and has in turn created more positive self-concepts within the Black community (e.g., Jones, 1979). Phinney, Lochner and Murphy (1990) state that those persons:

who do not explore and take a stand on issues regarding their status as minority group members,

nor develop a secure ethnic identity with which to obtain meaning and self-direction in an ethnically heterogeneous society, may be at risk for poor self-concept. (p. 54)

Finally, Proshansky and Newton (1968) point out that:

negative self-identity is frequently rooted in negative group identification. From this assumption, we would expect the converse to follow: that positive self-identity is dependent on positive group identification ... personal or self-pride is essentially the expression of group pride ... such group pride or belongingness is essential for individual growth and satisfaction. (p. 213)

When subjects studied were non-visible minority immigrants, or members of other cultural minorities similar results linking ethnic/cultural identity and self-esteem have been found. Rosenberg (1976) examined the self-esteem and self-acceptance of various cultural

group members, and compared these measures with each group's social class ranking. Although he found that self-acceptance was not related to the social prestige of one's ethnic group, it was concluded that national origin is associated with self-esteem. Here, different values and lifestyles, which either foster or hinder ethnic identification, were suggested as the specific factors affecting self-esteem. Driedger (1976, 1978) studied the ethnic identification of university students of British, French, German, Ukranian, Jewish, Polish or Scandinavian origin living in Winnipeg. He found that those groups who expressed strong positive identification and expressed pride and a wish to maintain their cultural background (the French and Jewish groups) did not feel inferior and showed little denial about their heritage. Those subjects who did not identify with their cultural group and who tended to deny their ethnic background (the Polish, Ukranian, and German groups) were found to have feelings of

inferiority and to feel less positively about themselves. From these results it can be inferred that individuals accepting their ethno-cultural background revealed high self-esteem, while those rejecting their ethno-cultural background showed indications of low self-esteem. Further, Rovner (1981) points out that if ethno-cultural minority group members are living in "dissonant contexts," where others are nonsupportive of expressions of group pride and where ethnocultural features are minimized, then these persons may be at risk for low self-esteem. Also, other researchers have found that among minority members, a strong identification with ethnic customs is positively and directly related to better self-concepts (Akoodie, 1984), and that a lack of identification with one's cultural heritage and cultural leaders can result in an absence of self-esteem (Lipton, 1963). Finally, in reviewing a number of studies which have examined the relationship between culture or ethnicity and the self-

concept, Burns (1979) concludes that, "many of the pieces of research ... suggest implicitly that minority groups which attempt to maintain cultural solidarity and integrity are better able to maintain self-esteem" (p. 256).

#### Ethnic/Cultural Identity and Academic Achievement

Researchers have found that students' attitudes toward their own ethnicity affects school performance. Research done by Phinney (1992), for example, has revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between school performance and ethnic identity. She found that American high school students who reported higher average grades also had higher ethnic identity scores. Verma and Bagley (1975) reviewed the existing literature and point out that the vast majority of studies show that Black students typically score significantly lower on standardized tests than their White counterparts. The suggested reasons for this finding have been many and often

controversial, however, low self-esteem due to discrimination and self rejection has been one reason often posited. Brown (1967) found that Black school children who have low self-esteem and a negative self-image are also more likely to perceive that their teachers are biased against them because of their skin color. Furthermore, similar research by Davidson and Lang (1967) has revealed that there is a significant correlation between students who believe that their teachers hold positive perceptions about them and those students with better academic achievement and better classroom behavior. Several studies have also found that Black subjects who are alienated from their culture and have negative cultural self-identities as a consequence, are more likely to have lower levels of educational achievement (e.g., Middleton, 1963; Blackwell & Hart, 1982). Similarly, Deutch (1960) reported that Negro children who have lower self-esteem and poor self-concepts regarding their ethnic

background score lower in academic performance compared to their White classmates. West Indian school children in London were assessed by Bagley and Coard (1975) for their degree of ethnic identification. They found that a significant number of these children expressed a strong rejection of their ethnicity and cultural background. Furthermore, the researchers' results revealed a significant correlation between poor ethnic identification and disorderly behavior in the classroom, as well as a correlation between poorer academic performance and rejection of ethnic identity. It has also been found that the loss of traditional cultural norms among Mexican American students leads to decreases in academic achievement (Cordova, 1970), while Mexican American adolescents who continue on to college have been found to be more identified with and accepting of their heritage and therefore to have a secure ethnic/cultural identity (Buriel, 1984). Similarly, Neilsen and Fernandez (1981) found that the

implementation of Spanish usage classes and a consequent increase in cultural identification resulted in higher achievement aspirations, and higher achievement levels in mathematics and vocabulary classes. Finally, Shamai (1992) examined the educational achievement levels of ethnic students in Canada between the years of 1941 to 1981, and found that Jewish and Asian students consistently maintained higher levels of school performance. These students were also exposed to strong cultural backgrounds and were able to maintain cultural morals and strong ethnic self-identities.

### Hypotheses

For this study the independent variables under investigation are ethnic/cultural identity and generation in Canada. The two dependent variables studied are self-esteem and academic achievement (using perceived grade point average and an academic self-concept measure).



Past research has revealed that individuals who report acceptance of and pride in their ethno-cultural heritage show high self-esteem (e.g., Phinney, 1992). This is true of Indian tribal populations (Lefley, 1982; Trimble, 1975), visible minority populations (e.g., Rice, Ruiz & Padilla, 1976; Ward & Braun, 1972; Wyche & Rotheram-Borus, 1990), and also for non-visible minority (or White) populations (e.g., Akoodie, 1984; Burns, 1979; Driedger, 1976, 1978). The vast majority of this research (excluding Phinney, 1992) has not directly compared ethnic/cultural identity and self-esteem measures, although it is suggestive of an association between them. Also, very few of these studies have used a distinctly multicultural university population. The present study hopes to replicate results of a positive correlation between ethnic/cultural identity and self-esteem reported by Phinney (1992) so that such findings can be extended to a Canadian sample. The literature examined for this

study also reveals that there is generally a decrease in the salience, or importance, of ethnic/cultural identity with the succession of generations. It is thus predicted that the effect of ethnic/cultural identity on self-esteem will be conditional on the generational status of the subjects. Therefore, it is hypothesized that: 1. For first generational members, high (positive) ethnic/cultural identity will be associated with higher self-esteem than low (negative) ethnic/cultural identity regardless of self-classification of ethno-cultural background. It is also hypothesized that: These expected differences in self-esteem will get smaller as generational membership status increases.

Studies on racial discrimination toward Blacks have found that a poor attitude about being Black may be a consequence of discrimination. Subjects with such attitudes have also been found to perform more poorly in school than their White counterparts (e.g., Bagley &

Coard, 1975; Blackwell & Hart, 1982; Deutch, 1960; Verma & Bagley, 1975). Similar results have been found for Mexican American subjects (Neilsen & Fernandez, 1987). Also Shamai (1981) reported that Canadian school students with consistently better academic performances came from backgrounds where maintenance of cultural traditions was also strong. Finally, Phinney (1992) reported a significant positive correlation between school grades and ethnic identity among high school students in the United States. This evidence points to a link between ethnic/cultural identity and academic achievement, but most of these studies have not directly measured these two variables, nor have they used university populations. Phinney's (1992) results of a positive correlation between ethnic/cultural identity and academic achievement are expected to be replicated in this study using a Canadian college population. As revealed by the literature reviewed, there is a decrease in the salience, or importance, of

ethnic/cultural identity with the succession of generations. So, it is expected that the effect of ethnic/cultural identity on academic achievement will be conditional on the generational status of the subjects. Therefore, it is hypothesized that: 2. For first generational members, high (positive) ethnic/cultural identity will be associated with higher academic achievement than low (negative) ethnic/cultural identity regardless of self-classification of ethno-cultural background. It is also hypothesized that: These expected differences in academic achievement will get smaller as generational membership status increases.

#### Method

##### Participants

For the study 414 participants were recruited from the University of Manitoba Introductory Psychology subject pool. The use of university students for studies of ethnic identity has been supported by a

number of researchers (Edwards & Doucette, 1987; Mackie & Brinkerhoff, 1984, 1988; Wunthrow, 1976). It is generally believed that such participants will be better educated and more socially aware of issues related to culture and ethnicity.

#### Materials

A booklet consisting of a brief demographic questionnaire, a modified version of the Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Academic Self-concept Scale (ASCS) was administered to each participant (see Appendix A). The questionnaire used was appropriate for all participants regardless of specific ethno-cultural background. IBM answer sheets were used for recording responses to the scales.

Demographic questionnaire. This set of questions was developed by the researcher to obtain participant information needed for the study. Specifically, perceived GPA and generational (immigrant) status were

assessed. To assess academic achievement level, participants were asked to indicate the perceived grade point average that they received in their previous year of university study. First-year university students were asked to indicate their Grade 12 average. Generational status was classified in terms of (a) first generation (immigrant) status, (b) second generation status, and (c) third and later generation status. New immigrants are those participants who indicate that they have been in Canada for five years or under; second generation participants are Canadian-born students whose parents immigrated to Canada; third generation participants are Canadian-born students whose grandparents immigrated to Canada; etc.

Ethnic/cultural self-identification measure:

Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity - MEIM (Phinney, 1992). Questions 1 to 20 of the questionnaire booklet consist of the MEIM with a modified version of the instructions. This scale was developed for the study of

ethnic identity. It is a measure of positive ethnic identity based on items which are applicable to all ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. This questionnaire is such that all individuals regardless of specific ethno-cultural background could participate. Participants who felt that they were not strongly identified with any one particular ethno-cultural background were able to complete the questionnaire by choosing the background which they felt to be most personally relevant. Specific ethno-cultural background was solicited in the opening part of this questionnaire. The MEIM contains 20 questions which are answered on a 4-point likert-type scale. The scale can be divided into three subscales. One final score (from 20 to 80) is derived by summing across items. The MEIM scores were categorized into highs and lows because the majority of the literature reviewed, as well as the hypotheses of the study, restrict their inquiry to the differences in self-esteem and academic

levels between individuals with high versus low ethnic/cultural identity. The upper half of scores (51 to 80) indicate high acceptance of ethnicity and define positive ethnic/cultural identity. The lower half of scores (20 to 50) indicate low acceptance of ethnicity (denial) and define negative ethnic/cultural identity. Reliability coefficients for the MEIM have been found to be fairly high. Reliability was established at 0.81 using a high school sample and at 0.90 using a college sample (Phinney, 1992). This scale is particularly suited for the present study because its development has been "based on the elements of ethnic identity that are common across groups, so that it can be used with all ethnic groups" (Phinney, 1992, p. 156).

General self-esteem measure: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Questions 21 to 30 of the questionnaire booklet make up the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. This scale is a simple and widely used measure of general self-esteem. The scale consists of 10



questions which are answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale. A final score (from 10 to 40) is obtained by summing across items. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has established reliability and validity. Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina and Allen (1980) found it to have an internal consistency reliability of 0.82, and Reynolds (1988) reported an internal consistency reliability of 0.82. Test-retest reliability using a 2-week time period was found to be 0.85 (Silber & Tippet, 1965). Convergent validity between the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and other measures of general self-concept has ranged from 0.56 to 0.83 (Silber & Tippet, 1965).

Academic achievement measure: Academic Self-Concept Scale - ASCS (Reynolds, 1988). In addition to perceived GPA, the ASCS was used as a second measure of academic achievement. The ASCS is contained in questions 31 to 70 in the questionnaire booklet. The ASCS scores were used in order to measure academic achievement based on subjective self-ratings of how

well participants believe they can perform academically (as contrasted with participants perceptions of the assigned and objective GPA). This inventory was used in order to provide information regarding participants' perceived ability to successfully perform academically. The ASCS scores in addition to the perceived GPA should give an indication of the participants' overall academic achievement. The ASCS was designed by Reynolds (1988) to provide information about participants' perceptions of their academic abilities. The scale consists of 40 items which are answered on a 4-point Likert-type format. The ASCS can be divided into seven subscales (Reynolds, 1988). One final score (from 40 to 160) is obtained by summing across items.

Internal consistency reliability for the total scale has been found to be 0.91 (Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina & Allen, 1980). In a later study of the ASCS, the internal consistency reliability for the total scale was determined at 0.92 (Reynolds, 1988). The

subscale internal consistency reliabilities were found to be as follows: grade and effort, 0.78; study habits/organizational self-perceptions, 0.81; peer evaluation of academic ability, 0.81; self-confidence in academics, 0.67; satisfaction with school, 0.59; self-doubt regarding ability, 0.81; self-evaluation with external standards, 0.56. Reynolds (1988) also reports that a test-retest reliability conducted with 82 subjects and a 2-week interval yielded a result of 0.88.

Convergent validity has also been established for the ASCS. Reynolds et al. (1980) found that the correlation between the ASCS and student GPA was 0.40, there was also a positive correlation between the ASCS and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale of 0.45. A multiple correlation of the ASCS with GPA and Rosenberg Self-Esteem scores as predictor variables resulted in a positive correlation of 0.64. Reynolds (1988) repeated these convergent validity studies with a larger sample

and found correlations of 0.53 between the ASCS and student GPA, 0.44 between the ASCS and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and a multiple correlation of 0.59 between the ASCS and GPA and Rosenberg Self-Esteem scores. Reynolds (1988) also gives evidence of discriminant validity for the ASCS with a low correlation of 0.17 between the ASCS and Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale scores.

#### Procedure

Participants recruited from the University of Manitoba Introductory Psychology subject pool were asked to complete a booklet comprised of the scales discussed above. Participants were ensured of confidentiality and were asked not to put any identifying information on the booklet. Participants were informed that they could choose not to answer any question, or could choose to stop completion of the booklet should they feel uncomfortable with the questions asked without loss of experimental credit.

Booklets were prepared in two forms in order to randomize the order in which the scales were presented. In one form the ethnic/cultural identity scale was presented first, while the second form presented this scale last. Booklets were distributed randomly to the participants. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked to hand them in to the experimenter present.

#### Data Analysis

The independent variables for this study are the ethnic/cultural identity scores and the participants' generational status. The ethnic/cultural identity was measured by the MEIM and analyzed separately for each self-classification of ethnic/cultural background. The generation in Canada of each participant was assessed as part of the demographic background. The following two dependent variables were examined as follows: (a) self-esteem (measured by the RSES) and (b) academic achievement using both perceived GPA (reported in the

demographic information) and academic self-concept (measured by the ASCS).

In order to test the hypotheses, MANOVAs were run for each background classification containing more than 55 participants, namely Canadian, White, Asian, and European groups. For each self-classified background a 2 x 3 MANOVA was run using ethnic/cultural identity (high, low) and generational status (immigrant, second generation, third and higher generation) as independent variables. The dependent variables are self-esteem and academic achievement (measured by perceived GPA and academic self-concept).

The main focus of the statistical analyses was on the interaction between the two independent variables in each MANOVA. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were also computed between all the variables used in the study.

## Results

Results from 17 Black and five Hispanic students were eliminated due to the small group numbers. A minimum of 55 participants classifiable into a single ethnic group was the pre-set criterion for retention. Results from another 26 participants were eliminated due to missing data for one or more of the five variables, thus reducing the total sample size from 415 to 367.

### Sample Characteristics

Answers to the self-reported ethnic group membership were categorized into the following four major ethnic groups: Canadian; White; Asian; and European. Participants belonging to the first group identified themselves as "Canadian," and respondents belonging to the second group identified themselves as "White." Participants placed in the Asian group responded as being "Asian," "Filipino," "Chinese," "East-Indian," "Vietnamese," or "Laotian." The European

group consists of participants who identified themselves as "European," "Ukrainian," "Polish," "German," "French," "Italian," "Portuguese," "Yugoslavian," "Icelandic," "Scottish," "Irish," "British," "Greek," and "Czech." The number of participants and the five variable means and standard deviations for each ethnic group are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the cell sizes for the levels of both independent variables in each group. It should be noted that the cell size distribution is largely uneven. The unequal numbers are a result of the ethnically and generationally heterogeneous quality of the university sample.

#### Tests of the Two Hypotheses

All statistical tests were run at 0.05 level of significance. A separate MANOVA was run on each of the



Table 1

Number of Participants and Descriptive Statistics of  
Variables for Each Ethnic Group

	Whole	Canadian	White	Asian	European
Sample	367	119	91	56	101
Size					
Number of	164	57	38	25	44
Males					
Number of	203	62	53	31	57
Females					
MEIM	<u>M</u> = 47.12	<u>M</u> = 45.39	<u>M</u> = 45.47	<u>M</u> = 50.73	<u>M</u> = 48.65
Scores	<u>SD</u> = 9.10	<u>SD</u> = 8.75	<u>SD</u> = 8.79	<u>SD</u> = 8.30	<u>SD</u> = 9.48
Generation	<u>M</u> = 2.06	<u>M</u> = 2.48	<u>M</u> = 2.52	<u>M</u> = 0.61	<u>M</u> = 1.97
Level	<u>SD</u> = 1.01	<u>SD</u> = 0.73	<u>SD</u> = 0.72	<u>SD</u> = 0.53	<u>SD</u> = 0.95
RSES	<u>M</u> = 33.47	<u>M</u> = 33.43	<u>M</u> = 33.76	<u>M</u> = 31.95	<u>M</u> = 34.11
Scores	<u>SD</u> = 5.01	<u>SD</u> = 5.35	<u>SD</u> = 5.46	<u>SD</u> = 4.42	<u>SD</u> = 4.43
ASCS	<u>M</u> = 106.43	<u>M</u> = 104.98	<u>M</u> = 107.71	<u>M</u> = 102.38	<u>M</u> = 109.23
Scores	<u>SD</u> = 16.94	<u>SD</u> = 16.80	<u>SD</u> = 18.18	<u>SD</u> = 13.03	<u>SD</u> = 17.49
Self-	<u>M</u> = 3.32	<u>M</u> = 3.27	<u>M</u> = 3.35	<u>M</u> = 3.36	<u>M</u> = 3.34
reported	<u>SD</u> = 0.69	<u>SD</u> = 0.71	<u>SD</u> = 0.69	<u>SD</u> = 0.66	<u>SD</u> = 0.68
GPA					

Table 2

Number of Participants in Each Ethnic Group for the  
Levels of Independent Variables

Independent Variable		Whole Sample	Canadian Group	White Group	Asian Group	European Group
Identity	High	141	34	29	33	45
	Low	226	85	62	23	56
Generational Status	First Generation	119	17	10	55	37
	Second Generation	77	28	23	1	25
	Third and Higher Generation	171	74	58	0	39

five ethnic groups to analyze the differential effects of ethnic/cultural identity and generational status on self-esteem and academic achievement (academic self-concept and GPA). Using Hotelling's test, the only significant effects were in the White group involving (a) a significant main effect for ethnic/cultural identity ( $F(3,82) = 6.82, p < 0.001$ ), (b) a significant main effect for generational status ( $F(6,162) = 4.28, p < 0.001$ ), and (c) a significant interaction between the two ( $F(6,162) = 3.92, p = 0.001$ ). It should be noted that the significant main effects found here need to be cautiously interpreted because of the significant interaction effect shown. Only data from the White group were analysed further.

#### Hypothesis 1: Self-Esteem

Follow-up ANOVAs for White self-esteem scores revealed significant main effects involving ethnic/cultural identity ( $F(1, 84) = 9.60, p = 0.003$ ),

generation ( $F(2,84) = 6.46, p = 0.002$ ), and interaction ( $F(2,84) = 8.83, p < 0.001$ ). The White group self-esteem means for the levels of each independent variable are shown in Table 3.

Given the interaction effect found in the overall MANOVA for the White group, additional ANOVAs on White group self-esteem scores were run isolating each level of each independent variable. Only the ANOVA isolating high MEIM scores showed that the self-esteem means were significantly different ( $F(2,26) = 4.27, p = 0.025$ ). See Figure 1. A Tukey post-hoc analysis on the high self-esteem means (Table 4) revealed that the first generation mean was significantly different from the third generation. The second generation mean fell between the two other means and was not significantly different from either of these means.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Self-esteem scores for  
the Levels of the Independent Variables for Each Ethnic  
Group

Independent		Canadian	White	Asian	European
Variable		Group	Group	Group	Group
Identity	High	<u>M</u> = 32.68	<u>M</u> = 28.68	<u>M</u> = 31.09	<u>M</u> = 33.64
		<u>SD</u> = 5.70	<u>SD</u> = 5.46	<u>SD</u> = 3.64	<u>SD</u> = 4.34
	Low	<u>M</u> = 34.62	<u>M</u> = 33.92	<u>M</u> = 32.79	<u>M</u> = 34.74
		<u>SD</u> = 4.00	<u>SD</u> = 6.18	<u>SD</u> = 4.52	<u>SD</u> = 4.30
Generational Status	First	<u>M</u> = 32.74	<u>M</u> = 31.90	<u>M</u> = 32.29	<u>M</u> = 33.60
	Generation	<u>SD</u> = 5.32	<u>SD</u> = 7.67	<u>SD</u> = 4.61	<u>SD</u> = 3.71
	Second	<u>M</u> = 34.17	<u>M</u> = 32.61	<u>M</u> = 31.59	<u>M</u> = 34.07
	Generation	<u>SD</u> = 5.01	<u>SD</u> = 5.62	<u>SD</u> = 4.01	<u>SD</u> = 4.22
	Third and	<u>M</u> = 34.04	<u>M</u> = 34.40	--	<u>M</u> = 34.90
	Higher	<u>SD</u> = 5.50	<u>SD</u> = 4.98	--	<u>SD</u> = 4.77
	Generation				
				*	

\* The Asian group did not contain any participants in the third  
and higher generation

Figure 1

White Group Self-Esteem Means Plotted for High and Low Identity

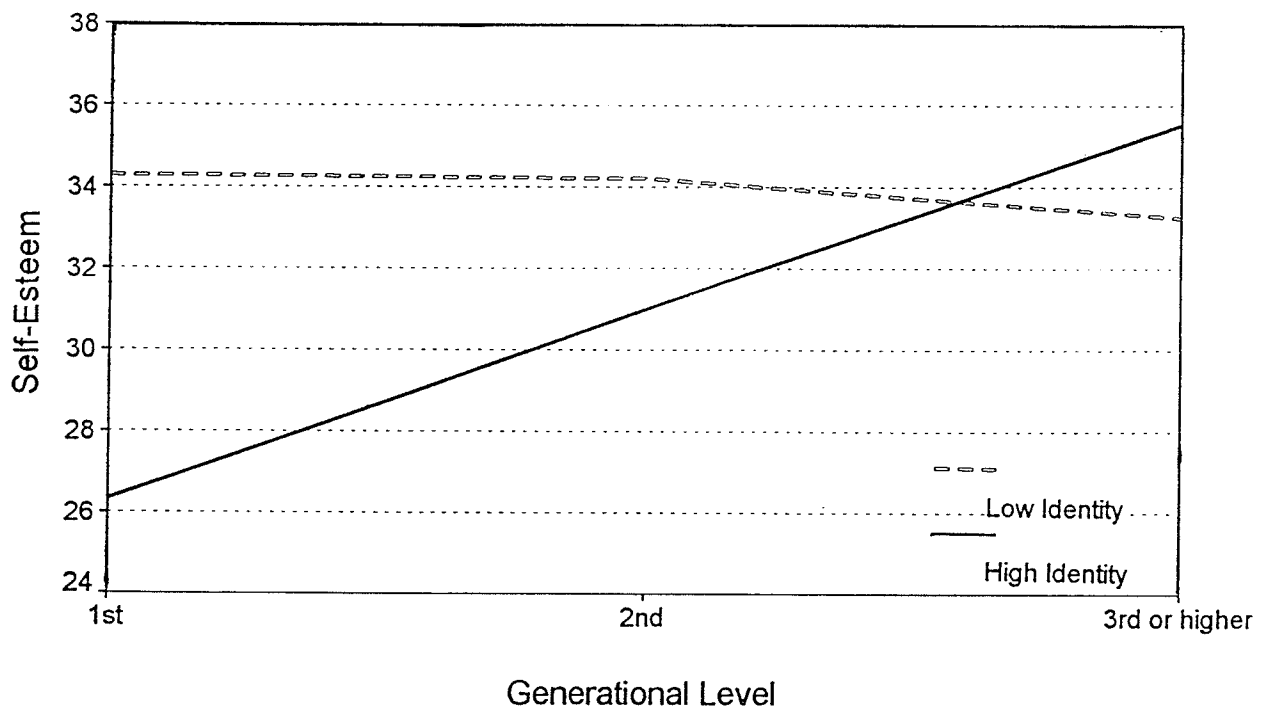


Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of White Group Self-Esteem Scores for Each Level of Ethnic/Cultural Identity and Generation

Independent Variables	1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd and higher Generation
High MEIM	$\underline{M} = 26.33$ $\underline{SD} = 12.34$	$\underline{M} = 31.00$ $\underline{SD} = 7.39$	$\underline{M} = 35.55$ $\underline{SD} = 4.01$
Low MEIM	$\underline{M} = 34.29$ $\underline{SD} = 3.90$	$\underline{M} = 34.21$ $\underline{SD} = 5.27$	$\underline{M} = 33.25$ $\underline{SD} = 5.35$

The remaining follow up ANOVAs run after isolating the low MEIM scores or each level of generation (Table 4) did not yield significant differences (all  $p$ 's less than 0.05).

#### Hypothesis 2: Academic Achievement

Follow-up ANOVA's for White ASCS scores and perceived GPA revealed no significant main effects or significant interaction. The means of the ASCS scores (Table 5) but not perceived reported GPA (Table 6) for high and low ethnic/cultural identity fell in the expected direction (i.e., the mean ASCS score is higher for participants with high ethnic/cultural identity than for participants with low ethnic/cultural identity for each ethnic group). However, this is not interpreted as being a trend of direction since results were not significant or close to significance.



Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of ASCS scores for the  
Levels of the Independent Variables for Each Ethnic  
Group

Independent Variable		Canadian Group	White Group	Asian Group	European Group
Identity	High	<u>M</u> = 103.93	<u>M</u> = 106.63	<u>M</u> = 99.14	<u>M</u> = 108.51
		<u>SD</u> = 17.28	<u>SD</u> = 19.20	<u>SD</u> = 15.96	<u>SD</u> = 17.22
	Low	<u>M</u> = 108.69	<u>M</u> = 112.89	<u>M</u> = 105.13	<u>M</u> = 109.74
		<u>SD</u> = 15.77	<u>SD</u> = 15.48	<u>SD</u> = 9.56	<u>SD</u> = 17.43
Generational Status	First Generation	<u>M</u> = 106.46	<u>M</u> = 112.36	<u>M</u> = 102.67	<u>M</u> = 111.64
		<u>SD</u> = 15.48	<u>SD</u> = 16.92	<u>SD</u> = 10.33	<u>SD</u> = 17.62
	Second Generation	<u>M</u> = 106.50	<u>M</u> = 109.41	<u>M</u> = 101.59	<u>M</u> = 110.46
		<u>SD</u> = 18.15	<u>SD</u> = 18.00	<u>SD</u> = 14.73	<u>SD</u> = 15.82
	Third and Higher Generation	<u>M</u> = 105.97	<u>M</u> = 107.48	--	<u>M</u> = 107.66
		<u>SD</u> = 17.00	<u>SD</u> = 18.94	--	<u>SD</u> = 18.75
				*	

\* The Asian group did not contain any participants in the third and higher generation category

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of GPA scores for the  
Levels of the Independent Variables for Each Ethnic  
Group

Independent Variable		Canadian Group	White Group	Asian Group	European Group
Identity	High	<u>M</u> = 3.30	<u>M</u> = 3.33	<u>M</u> = 3.24	<u>M</u> = 3.27
		<u>SD</u> = 0.75	<u>SD</u> = 0.59	<u>SD</u> = 0.73	<u>SD</u> = 0.70
	Low	<u>M</u> = 3.08	<u>M</u> = 2.95	<u>M</u> = 3.44	<u>M</u> = 3.47
		<u>SD</u> = 0.58	<u>SD</u> = 0.88	<u>SD</u> = 0.61	<u>SD</u> = 0.68
Generational Status	First Generation	<u>M</u> = 2.94	<u>M</u> = 2.73	<u>M</u> = 3.31	<u>M</u> = 3.47
		<u>SD</u> = 0.64	<u>SD</u> = 1.00	<u>SD</u> = 0.72	<u>SD</u> = 0.62
	Second Generation	<u>M</u> = 3.39	<u>M</u> = 3.28	<u>M</u> = 3.37	<u>M</u> = 3.39
		<u>SD</u> = 0.51	<u>SD</u> = 0.54	<u>SD</u> = 0.64	<u>SD</u> = 0.75
	Third and Higher Generation	<u>M</u> = 3.23	<u>M</u> = 3.40	--	<u>M</u> = 3.21
		<u>SD</u> = 0.76	<u>SD</u> = 0.69	--	<u>SD</u> = 0.72

\*

\* The Asian group did not contain any participants in the third and higher generation category

### Intercorrelations of Dependent Variables

Intercorrelations among the dependent variables were computed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. These results reveal some support for the literature on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. For each group scores from the ASCS were significantly and positively correlated with self-esteem scores (Table 7). Also as expected from the literature, the ASCS scores were significantly and positively correlated with the GPAs for all but the Asian group (see Table 7). There were no significant correlations between self-esteem and reported GPAs.

### Discussion

In this study, results did not support the two hypotheses. Although non-White self-esteem scores were higher for participants with high ethnic/cultural identity and the scores from the ASCS were higher for

Table 7

Intercorrelations of Dependent Variables For Each  
Ethnic Group

	Canadian		White		Asian		European	
	Group		Group		Group		Group	
	RSES	ASCS	RSES	ASCS	RSES	ASCS	RSES	ASCS
<u>GPA</u>								
<u>r</u> =	0.005	0.195	0.160	0.257	0.029	0.072	0.063	0.200
<u>p</u> =	0.953	0.035	0.130	0.014	0.831	0.596	0.053	0.003
<u>ASCS</u>								
<u>r</u> =	0.488		0.369		0.303		0.395	
<u>p</u> <	0.001		0.001		0.025		0.001	

all participants with high ethnic/cultural identity than for participants with low ethnic/cultural identity, these results did not approach significance and, therefore, cannot be interpreted as support for the hypotheses. In fact, the White self-esteem scores were lower for participants with high ethnic/cultural identity than for participants with low ethnic/cultural identity with self-esteem increasing for each subsequent generation (the reverse of hypothesis 1). Finally, results relevant to the second hypothesis on generational status for non-Whites did not follow any general pattern, and so were inconclusive at best.

#### Significant Findings

The results that did reach statistical significance seem puzzling because they reveal a pattern which is contrary to what was expected for self-esteem according to the first hypothesis. For the

White group self-esteem was significantly higher for participants with low ethnic/cultural identity than for participants with high ethnic/cultural identity. Also, contrary to the hypothesis, participants in this group who belonged to the third generation scored significantly higher on self-esteem than participants belonging to the second generation, who in turn had significantly higher self-esteem scores than first generation participants. Further analyses revealed that these significant effects were more strongly due to scores from the White group members with high ethnic/cultural identity scores.

These results may be interpreted in two ways. For both explanations, it should be noted that these results were found for a group of participants who identified themselves simply as "White." Such a self-label involves the absence of reference to any specific ethno-cultural background; it is a self-label according to physical appearance. This label may also imply a

rejection and denial, to some extent, of one's ethnic heritage.

The first interpretation posits that a higher score on the ethnic/cultural identity measure (i.e., a stronger identification with being "White") may indicate a stronger level of denial and rejection of their ethno-cultural background than a lower score. Thus it follows that participants with a higher level of identification to the White group (and therefore more rejection of their ethno-cultural background) would have lower self-esteem, because they would be more completely separating themselves from their roots. Similarly, in terms of the generational findings for the White group, one would expect a greater level of ethno-cultural background denial to be associated with the first generation, less for the second generation, and the least for third generation participants. This first explanation of results suggests that since all first generation Canadians are children of immigrants

and thus are more likely to be exposed to the language and culture of their origin, their self-identification as "White" likely indicates more active rejection or denial of their ethno-cultural background. As the generational level increases, the exposure to and the retention of their original language and culture becomes progressively less. Consequently, higher "White" identification for earlier generations may reflect that they are trying harder to fit in with the new culture. This need to adapt to the host country decreases as generations increase. Therefore, their self-esteem would increase as time makes the need to fit in, at the expense of the culture of origin, decrease.

The second explanation of these results suggests that these participants are undergoing the process of acculturation, and the results reflect how well they are becoming integrated. Persons who are integrating into a new society try to both maintain their culture



of origin and adopt the culture of the dominant majority (Berry & Kim, 1988), and have been found to generally possess better mental health than non-integrating individuals (Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry, Wintrob, Sindell & Mawhinney, 1981; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). It is suggested that participants identifying themselves as "White" may be less integrated into the "Canadian" culture by denying their identification with Canada. Therefore, the weaker their identification with "White" culture, the stronger their identification with Canadian culture, so they would exhibit greater self-esteem. If this is the case, then the generational findings can be explained as indicative of increasing integration as generations progress. Thus, according to this second explanation, it would be expected for self-esteem to increase as participants become more integrated into Canadian culture.

Additional Findings

Results from the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients strengthen the existing body of research on self-esteem and academic achievement. Consistent with previous findings, this study shows that the two are positively correlated. Also in accordance with published findings, scores from the ASCS were positively correlated with GPA scores for all groups except the Asian group. The lack of a significant result for the Asian group may be related to this group's particularly high expectations for academic success. Generally, then, these results serve to strengthen the existing body of research on the interrelationships between self-esteem and academic achievement. Furthermore, this study has expanded the existing research to include the relationship of these two variables to ethnic/cultural identity and generational status.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is that sampling from the Faculty of Arts (specifically the Undergraduate Psychology subject pool) may have contributed to the limited number of visible minority (particularly Asian) students. This is primarily due to the fact that a greater number of Asian students are enrolled in areas such as the Faculties of Science and Engineering. Second, the cut-off criteria used to determine high and low ethnic/cultural identity (using the upper half and the lower half of scores) may also have contributed to the lack of significant findings. Scores falling in the middle range were not eliminated or examined separately, and may have thus obscured the effects of the more extreme high and low ethnic/cultural identity scores. In addition, the diversity of participants resulted in relatively small and uneven group samples. While the minimum number of participants in each background group (fifty-five) may

have been sufficient, the generational membership for each group was found to be uneven. For example, the Canadian group consisted largely of second and third generation participants, whereas the European group consisted largely of first and second generation participants. These small samples and uneven distributions probably contributed to a lack of more significant results. Also, while the MEIM is a particularly useful instrument for use with ethnically diverse populations, and has impressive reliability and validity support, it is still a relatively new instrument. Unfortunately, similar tests which can be used across groups are, to the researcher's knowledge, not in existence. As well, this study did not measure the existing level of acculturation of the participants or how adjusted and content the participants are with their lives in Canada. Information of this nature may provide some insight into the lack of significant findings in the present study. Finally, the population

sampled for this study was restricted to a university setting, which is a highly select population.

#### Future Research Suggestions

This study has illuminated a number of ways in which future research in this area may be improved. First, larger and more evenly matched ethnic groups should be used both in the university setting and across other populations. This will allow for more conclusive answers which may be generalized to the entire population of Canadians. Secondly, the results from the self-identified "White" group point to the need for a clarification on whether such participants are rejecting their background of origin, becoming more integrated to the host country, or a combination of both. Such investigations would also provide insight into the process of acculturation and the ramifications of self-identification which does not include ethno-cultural references. Also, future research might clarify the relationship of generational status to the

findings if information is analyzed from generations across families. Past research has successfully involved testing immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren. Similar research using the MEIM and measures of self-esteem and academic achievement would be a useful extension and clarification of the present study. Finally clarification and extension of this study may involve the use of established instruments other than the ones used here to measure the tested variables.

#### Contributions of the Study

Overall, the results from this study raise more questions than answers. The lack of findings illustrates the need for clarification regarding the belief that there is a relationship between ethnic/cultural identity, self-esteem and academic achievement. Nonetheless, this study does not discredit the notion that the psychological welfare and educational enrichment of individuals would be well

served by a system that allows and nurtures the development of positive ethno-cultural identification. This research also points to further examination of the belief that new immigrants, their children, and future generations should be aided in their attempts to find a compromise between their culture of origin and their adopted culture by creating a balance that includes a nurturance of both cultures and avoids a rejection of ethno-cultural background.

Furthermore, ethnic/cultural identification is believed to be especially important for persons living in multiethnic societies such as Canada (Akoodie, 1984). In recognition of this, the Canadian government has implemented the "policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." The rationale behind the implementation of the policy was explained by Pierre Trudeau as follows:

the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the Government of

Canada as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. (Prime Minister's statement, House of Commons, October, 1971, p. 2, cited in Verma & Bagley, 1982).

Finally, recent evidence suggests that the spirit behind the policy of multiculturalism continues to persist to date and have implications for the present residents of Canada. According to Burnet (1987), ethnic self-identification is strongly prevalent and therefore the multicultural structure of Canadian society "is no myth" (p. 70). In addition, Hiller states that "much of the dynamic of Canadian society has its origin in ethnic differences among the population" (p. 163). In a study designed to examine the patterns of ethnic



identification in Western Canada, Driedger, Thacker and Currie (1982) found results which indicated that, "the 'ethnic' category is still a very important preference for self-identification and identification of others in Winnipeg and Edmonton" (p. 66). Finally, results from the recent Statistics Canada census of 1991 revealed that Manitoba is Canada's most ethnically heterogeneous province, and is so by a margin of 16 percent over the national average (Wild, 1993). Thus, it can be concluded that an examination of how the quality of one's ethnic/cultural identity affects other aspects of one's psychological and general well-being such as self-esteem and academic achievement is a relevant and important investigation for Canada as a whole, and specifically for the province of Manitoba.

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Appendix A

Please answer the following background information questions:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

Present year of university enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

Most recent Grade Point Average (GPA): \_\_\_\_\_

If this is your first year of university enrollment  
what was your Grade 12 GPA (percentage or letter  
grade): \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth:

Country \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

Citizenship(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have lived:

in Winnipeg \_\_\_\_\_

in Canada \_\_\_\_\_

outside of Canada \_\_\_\_\_

If you are residing in Canada for study/work purposes  
please indicate which is applicable to you:

\_\_\_\_ I plan to go back to my country of origin upon  
completion of my studies.

\_\_\_\_ I plan to go to another country to study or work.

\_\_\_\_ I plan to stay in Canada. If you plan to stay in  
Canada, what are some of your reasons for this

decision: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your:

Father's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Paternal Grandfather's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Paternal Grandmother's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Maternal Grandfather's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Maternal Grandmother's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever visited your land of origin ?

Yes \_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_

Father's religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Your religion: \_\_\_\_\_

In this country, people come from many different cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Mexican-Canadian, Hispanic, Black, Asian-Canadian, Native Indian, Anglo-Canadian, and White. Every person is born into an ethnic group; or sometimes two or more groups, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it. The following questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

If you come from a single ethno-cultural background, please indicate which one here: \_\_\_\_\_

If you come from a mixed ethno-cultural background, please indicate each of them here:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

(a) If you identify yourself strongly with only one of these backgrounds, please indicate which one here: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If you do NOT identify yourself strongly with any single ethno-cultural background, please indicate which background you feel is most personally relevant for you: \_\_\_\_\_



Use the numbers given below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Fill in the corresponding response on the IBM sheet:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Somewhat Disagree

3 = Somewhat Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own.
5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
6. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong

to.

7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together.

8. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.

9. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own.

10. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.

11. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.

12. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.

13. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.

14. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.

15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.
16. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
17. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.
18. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
19. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own.
20. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.
21. I feel that I am a person of worth at least on an equal plane with others.
22. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
23. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
24. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
25. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

26. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
27. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
28. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
29. I certainly feel useless at times.
30. At times I think I am no good at all.
31. Being a student is a very rewarding experience.
32. If I try hard enough, I will be able to get good grades.
33. Most of the time my efforts in school are rewarded.
34. No matter how hard I try I don't do well in school.
35. I often expect to do poorly on exams.
36. All in all, I feel I am a capable student.
37. I do well in my courses given the amount of time I dedicate to studying.
38. My parents are not satisfied with my grades in college.
39. Others view me as intelligent.
40. Most courses are very easy for me.
41. I sometimes feel like dropping out of school.

- 42. Most of my classmates do better in school than I do.
- 43. Most of my instructors think I am a good student.
- 44. At times I feel college is too difficult for me.
- 45. All in all, I am proud of my grades in college.
- 46. Most of the time while taking a test I feel confident.
- 47. I feel capable of helping others with their classwork.
- 48. I feel teachers' standards are too high for me.
- 49. It's hard for me to keep up with my classwork.
- 50. I am satisfied with the class assignments that I turn in.
- 51. At times I feel like a failure.
- 52. I feel I don't study enough before a test.
- 53. Most exams are easy for me.
- 54. I have doubts that I will do well in my major.
- 55. For me, studying hard pays off.
- 56. I have a hard time getting through school.

- 57. I am good at scheduling my study time.
- 58. I have a fairly clear sense of my academic goals.
- 59. I'd like to be a much better student than I am now.
- 60. I often get discouraged about school.
- 61. I enjoy doing my schoolwork.
- 62. I consider myself a very good student.
- 63. I usually get the grades I deserve in my courses.
- 64. I do not study as much as I should.
- 65. I usually feel on top of my work by finals week.
- 66. Others consider me a good student.
- 67. I feel that I am better than the average college student.
- 68. In most of the course, I feel that my classmates are better prepared than I am.
- 69. I feel that I don't have the necessary abilities for certain courses in my major.
- 70. I have poor study habits.