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Examining Differences in Self-Concept and Language Between Monolingual and Bilingual Undergraduate Students

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By

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and my family. To my husband, Zachary, thank you for pushing me to apply to this program. You have shown me nothing but unconditional love and support throughout this entire journey. I will forever be grateful that we chose to invest in each other's dreams. To my father, Mario, you are the definition of the American Dream and I'm incredibly honored to be your daughter. To my mother, Isabel, you are my rock and the woman I aspire to be. I will never forget all the times you sat, listened, and cheered me on. To my older sister, Senia, thank you for signing me up for school. I truly would not be here without you initiating everything. To my younger sister, Andie, thank you for being my motivation. You have made me a better person and I cannot wait to see what is in store for your future.

This doctorate is our accomplishment. We did it! Forever a Vega-Wagner!

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Abstract

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The literature is lacking in studies that examine self-concept and language status among individuals older than adolescence. The purpose of this study is to conduct a quantitative non-experimental comparative design to examine differences in self-concept and language status (monolingual or bilingual) between male and female undergraduate students in California. A total of 97 participants were examined in the study. The researcher conducted descriptive statistics on the demographics as well as a MANOVA and an ANOVA to answer the proposed research question. Based on the findings presented, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis of research question 1: There is no difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT). In order to contribute to the literature, future research should continue to examine self-concept and language among older populations and perhaps consider conducting a longitudinal study to look at self-concept over periods of transition.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

¿Quién soy? This statement translates to “Who am I?” This is a question I found myself pondering for most of my life; however, it did not make much sense to me until I watched the 1997 movie, Selena. In the movie, Selena’s father discusses the struggles of being Mexican American. Though the conversation is meant to be lighthearted, Selena’s father highlights the struggle of understanding the self when you are caught between two worlds. Watching this scene was my first explanation as to why I felt confused for the majority of my childhood and adolescence. During the weekdays, I would go to public school and my friends would mimic my Spanish, initially celebrating my second language. My ability made me feel needed, especially when office staff pulled me out of class to help translate for monolingual Hispanic families. Five days out of the week, I was one of a kind. However, I often found myself surrounded by children who spoke both my languages during the weekend. One would assume that this would solidify how I see myself, yet it just created more confusion. During the weekend, I was constantly reminded by family members that although I spoke a second language it was at a novice level when compared to my fluent-speaking family members. In high school, I was constantly being told by peers that I was “too Mexican to be American” and “too American to be Mexican”. I began to wonder why I was eating carnitas on the fourth of July while my friends were eating hot dogs and why I was not celebrating Día de Los Tres Reyes while my family in Mexico did. The scene from Selena (1997) was the first time I realized that I may not be alone in this experience of searching for my identity.

As I began researching this topic, I realized that there are many examples similar to my experience. For example, in recent mainstream media, there was a resurfaced clip that had gone

viral of Mexican boxer Ryan Garcia needing an interpreter when fellow Mexican boxer Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. was presenting him with sound advice in Spanish. The Victorville, California native was known for coming in and out of the ring holding a Mexican flag on his back. The fans and the press heavily criticized Garcia, claiming that he was not a "true" Mexican. Some spectators went as far as to claim that Garcia should not walk around with Mexico's flag on his back. Even doing a quick Google search on Ryan Garcia results in the headline, "Ryan Garcia doesn't speak Spanish" (Radhyan, 2023). As a result, Garcia responded with "I don't speak Spanish, but I got the Mexican blood in me. Viva Mexico!" It appeared that even with heavy criticism, Garcia still identified with the Mexican side of himself and did not allow others to break his sense of self.

Struggling to understand your sense of self is not unique to Mexican American culture. In fact, there are examples of other ethnicities struggling to understand who they are in a historical context. Famous Japanese American writer, Yoshiko Uchida, has written countless fiction and non-fiction books depicting the struggles of Japanese Americans' perception of themselves during the Internment period of World War II (Harada, 1998). In her autobiographical book, Desert Exile, Uchida (2015) reintroduces the two terms *Nisei* and *Issei*. The term Issei refers to "first generation" individuals who were born in Japan, while Nisei refers to "second generation" individuals who were born in the United States. In other words, Nisei refers to Japanese Americans (Morishima, 2017). When the bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred, the United States instantly saw Japan, as well as the Japanese people residing in the United States, as a threat. As a result, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order that forced over 120,000 Japanese, Japanese Americans, and those of Japanese heritage to be imprisoned (Camp, 2018; Wegers, 2010). "Society caused us to feel ashamed of something that should have made us feel

proud. Instead of directing anger at the society that excluded and diminished us, such was the climate of the times and so low our self-esteem that many of us Nisei tried to reject our own Japaneseness and the Japanese ways of our parents," (Uchida, 2015). This excerpt written by Uchida (2015) demonstrated that other ethnicities, not just those of Hispanic descent, were struggling to understand themselves. Consequently, these three examples demonstrate that regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnicity, many individuals are also asking the question, "Who am I?". These accounts led me to question what link tied these stories together. Could language be the main contributor to understanding who you are? Therefore, I was led to ask the research question, does knowledge of multiple languages impact the development of the self?

Theories of the Self

Before engaging in that research, I had to understand what the "self" is. Prominent sociologist Charles H. Cooley argued that the self is not formed by others' thoughts or opinions but instead by what we think their opinions might be of us. As a result, Cooley coined the term, "looking-glass self" as a way to describe this phenomenon of the self (Cooley, 1902). To help further my understanding of the development of the self, I examined Harter's (2001) work. According to Harter (2001), the construction of the self begins early, starting in early childhood when the development of language occurs.

Why Self-Concept and Language

Growing up, I was constantly being told by my peers that I was a "white-washed Mexican". Statements like these had confused me deeply. I began to wonder if I was allowed to do or behave in certain ways. Above all it made it difficult to define the question, "Who am I?". This led me to ponder the thought that others may feel similarly. If this was the case, are the

other individuals experiencing this able to speak more than one language? Another explanation is that everyone has trouble understanding themselves at one point in time regardless of the number of languages spoken.

For this reason, I have decided to examine differences in self-concept between monolingual and bilingual undergraduate students. The reason I decided to specifically examine current undergraduate students is due to the lack of literature looking into this specific sample population. As mentioned previously, many researchers such as Harter, only look at younger populations. Furthermore, understanding and forming a healthy view of the self takes time, so looking at an older population should bring about more concrete thoughts about the view of the self.

Definition of Key Terms

A variety of words will be consistent throughout this dissertation, I have provided brief definitions of each term.

Self-Concept: The awareness and perception of the self that is based on interactions with the environment that can be perceived as good or bad, personal interpretation of the self, and experiences that are had. (Baumeister, 1997; Chao et al., 2018; Niehaus & Adelson, 2013; Shavelson et al., 1976; Saraff, 2020; Tuttle & Tuttle, 2004; Wolffe, 2000; Woolfolk, 2001; Woolfolk, 2007).

Monolingual: a person who has, understands, and uses one language. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Bilingual: a person who has, understands, and uses multiple languages. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

This led me to ask and answer the following questions:

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT)?
    a. H_0: There is no difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT).
    b. H_a: There is a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Though broad, self-concept is quite complex. It can be broken down into subtopics (Calero et al., 2013; Chao & McInerney, 2018) or seen as a whole topic that can stand alone (Niehaus & Adelson, 2013; Saraff et al., 2020). For the purposes of this literature review and the overall study, our understanding of self-concept has been defined as a stand-alone concept followed by one subtopic. Self-concept is defined as the awareness and perception of the self that is based on interactions with the environment that can be perceived as good or bad, personal interpretation of the self, and experiences that are had (Baumeister, 1997; Chao et al., 2018; Niehaus & Adelson, 2013; Shavelson et al., 1976; Saraff, 2020; Tuttle & Tuttle, 2004; Wolffe, 2000; Woolfolk, 2001; Woolfolk, 2007).

The following review of literature is to examine studies of self-concept among both monolingual and bilingual students. The literature suggests that there is a difference in self-concept between monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals. Moreover, the literature demonstrates the difficulty that bilingual/multilingual individuals have with understanding the development of the self.

Self-Concept

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Cooley's (1902) theory is a key component to understanding self-concept. In order to comprehend this theory, one must first understand the three principle elements of Cooley's "looking glass self" theory. The first principal element is the imagination of our appearance to the other individual (Cooley, 1902). In other words, the individual is asking themselves the following question, " How do I appear to others?". The second element is imagining the judgment the individual has on your appearance, which could be either positive or

negative. The self gets formed in the third principle where the individual is reflecting on the first two principles then makes revisions to how they think about themselves. Cooley (1902) thus states what "moves us (the individual) to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical, but an imputed sentiment of the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind". In sum, Cooley is saying that the self is just a reflection of what you think others are saying about you, not necessarily what is actually being said.

If the self is merely a reflection, then can it be measured with reliable and valid tools? The answer to this question is yes. The primary way to measure self-concept is through self-reported measures. Thankfully there are plenty of scales in the literature to choose from. However, many self-concept measures were published over ten years ago. Luckily, the third edition of the Piers-Harris was recently revised in 2021. One major advantage of the Piers-Harris is its ability to examine six different areas separately while also providing a total self-concept score. This measure also takes into account potential response bias and inconsistent responding. Given the number of subscales this measure has, it would be surprising to not see differences between participants. Therefore, as a researcher, I am led to believe that there is a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT).

Language Contributes to the Development of the Self

As indicated above, Harter (2001), proposed that the formation of the self occurs when language development begins. Although language is discussed in her book, Harter's (2001) concepts focus solely on how a toddler begins to assign labels in their language. Language is a

major contributor to the development of the self because it introduces individuals to judgments that are deemed either good or bad. Over time, judgments are divided into more advanced evaluations including the examination of aesthetics, social ability, and emotional ability (Harter, 2001). Harter's (2001) work addresses the construction of the self in childhood and emerging adolescence. Yet, what occurs after early adolescence? Does the formation of the self end in early adolescence or does it continue? I believe that as a person ages their development of the self becomes more clear. It strays away from the subjectivity of whether or not something is "pretty" or not and formulates itself to a narrowed objective outlook. Even in Harter's later work, she discusses sociocultural foundations that help formulate the development of the self; however, it lacks a discussion of language and focuses more on culture (Harter, 2015). Thus, it is apparent that language has been found to contribute to the construction of the self. However, there is little information in the literature that expands on language and the formation of the self after adolescence.

Self-Concept & Monolingual Individuals

A detailed review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of studies that examine and successfully define monolingualism. As a result, there are also a limited number of studies that examine monolingualism and self-concept or the development of the self. This finding does not mean that monolingual individuals are not examined in these studies; rather, it is not a focus of the study. The number of monolingual/bilingual participants may be included in the demographics portion of the article; however, this information is not typically included in the final analysis. Therefore, this study not only intends to provide a working definition for monolingualism but also to expand on the literature already presented. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), a person who is defined as a monolingual individual is an individual who has,

understands, and uses one language. For the purposes of the study, the monolingual individuals in this study are solely English-speaking individuals. Bettney (2020) discusses the relationship between monolingualism and monoculturalism from a Latin American perspective. The relation ties back to an idea first highlighted by Hamel (2008) that monolingualism lacks several components bilingual individuals face in their day-to-day lives. Monolingual norms are rarely skeptical about citizenship status and where loyalty lies when compared to Latin American governments (Bettney, 2020; Hamel, 2008). De Mejía and Montes Rodríguez (2008) further elaborate on the power of loyalty to one's culture and language as it might threaten the overall identity of the nation or the individual. The researchers suggest that having one language and one culture keeps the self-concept intact, without the risk of confusion in one's identity. A weakness to this argument, however, is that it assumes that monolingual individuals never experience a struggle or fluctuation with understanding the self and have a strong, stable self-concept. It would be unfair to make the assumption that this argument is true in all cases (Marsh, 1989). As a result, this idea will thus be explored throughout the review of the literature. Furthermore, though loyalty to one's culture is not a central focus of the proposed study, it would be wrong to ignore how critical language is to individuals within both communities.

Self-Concept & Bilingual/Multilingual Individuals

When examining bilingualism or multilingualism, previous studies have found that there is difficulty in balancing a second language (Bettney, 2020; Cho & Wang, 2020; Fuentes, 2019; Guglani, 2016; Kang, 2013). Kang (2013) found that bilingual individuals do not speak their two languages equally all the time. One language tends to overrule the other. Cho & Wang (2020) demonstrate this concept as they explore a seven-year-old Korean American by the pseudonym name of Meeso. The researchers collected data via observations between Meeso and her peers as

well as interactions with her teachers. The peers and teachers were a combination of monolingual and bilingual individuals. Cho & Wang (2020) understood that it might be difficult to ask specific questions regarding self-concept. Instead, they asked informal age-appropriate questions when needed. Findings from the case study found that due to Meeso's difficulty with learning the Korean language, she appeared to align herself more closely with her American identity when she was in the Korean heritage language school. Conversely, when she was in the public-school setting, Meeso embraced her Korean language more which tended to attract her peers to learn more about her background. The language chosen is based on the communicative need of the individual (Kang, 2013). This was significant because the study explains that Meeso's identity is fluid, and it allows her to be a part of different environments all shaping her as she gets older (Cho & Wang, 2020). The following study demonstrates the complexity of bilingual individuals and how they do not easily fall into one category, especially in terms of self-concept. Therefore, individuals similar to Meeso do not easily fall into one category nor are they inflexible or simple. Their study, however, was limited in its application due to the focus on one individual for the study sample size. It may have been more informative for generalization purposes to have a larger participant size. Despite this, Cho & Wang (2020) provide an in-depth and personal explanation of Meeso and her experience with bilingualism that may have not been accomplished with more participants in the study.

Whereas Cho & Wang's (2020) study was a single case study, Guglani's work with bilingual individuals and their cultural identity is a mixed-method study that examines 48 participants between the ages of 13-80. The study focused on the Hispanic community in Western New York, specifically a church community. The participants were interviewed about their cultural and linguistic identity. The research article explains the potential paths these

individuals take: do they preserve their current identity and reject anything new; do they ditch their current identity and embrace what's new; or do they find a way to form an identity that is a combination of the two? Data collection consisted of observations over six months, interviews with the participants (ethnographic/semi-structured), and interviews with the church leaders. Several themes were identified including language(s) used at home, cultural identity, linguistic identity, relative importance of cultural linguistic identity, resources in the home (Spanish/English), whose responsibility it is to teach Spanish, and language used at church (Guglani, 2016). There was a distinguishable difference between older and younger participants when it came to how close they align with their cultural identity. Older participants felt closer to this identity, having lived longer in their native country while younger participants felt more distant since they have resided in the U.S longer. Overall, Guglani (2016) found that bilingual individuals feel that it is important to pass their language on to future generations as it helps them gain a stronger cultural identity and sense of self (Guglani, 2016).

Another group that is often studied with bilingualism and multilingualism is English Language Learners (ELL). ELLs are defined by Niehaus and Adelson (2013) as individuals whose first language is not English and who vary in English proficiency. In their study, Niehaus and Adelson (2013) examined the self-concept of native English-speaking children, Spanish-speaking English Language learners (ELLs), and ELLs from Asian language backgrounds. They used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten class of 1998-99 and used an adapted version of a self-concept scale known as the Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ-I). The study conducted a multigroup confirmatory factor analyses and found that their measure (SDQ-I) measured self-concept in a similar way among all three groups of participants. Additionally, six latent variables including internal problems, external problems,

peer relationships, reading, math, and all subjects were investigated. The findings show that Asian language ELLs reported higher academic self-concept than native English-speakers in math, Spanish-speaking ELLs were the highest in internal and external problems, and Asian language ELLs self-reported fewer external problems and scored lower on peer relationships. A question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the participants of the study truly understood their self-concept since they ranged from kindergarten to third grade. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Niehaus and Adelson (2013) most likely adapted the scale to address this exact issue.

It is important to point out that the main sources of information for all the above mentioned studies have been gathered through interviews, observations, surveys/questionnaires, or scales (Calero et al., 2013; Chao et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2019; Cho, 2016; Cho & Wang, 2020; Fuentes, 2019; Guglani, 2016; Kang, 2013; Mora Vázquez et al., 2021; Niehaus & Adelson, 2013; Saraff et al., 2020), as this is the most common way to assess self-concept.

Self-Concept & Undergraduate Students

Kang (2013) has noticed numerous individuals in the U.S. are developing an interest in learning other languages aside from English for economic and national security benefits. In addition to these benefits, learning a second language can help establish solid identities for individuals of ethnic backgrounds. In fact, Al-Azami et al. (2010) highlights the success of allowing the use of both languages to help promote students' learning and meet their needs while additionally fostering positive relationships (Cho, 2016).

Fuentes (2019) studied three English learners (EL) who were enrolled as undergraduates at a university. These students were considered EL because they were unable to meet the language proficiency guidelines of their university. Therefore, the ethnography study focuses on

how these three students perceive themselves (self-perception/self-concept) in the university setting. The findings of the study discuss the flaws in the university's language proficiency tests in which having citizenship in the U.S. automatically meant that language proficiency was met over having relative fluency in the English language. Relative fluency includes not just being able to speak the English language but also being able to read proficiently. The study explains that the label of EL does have a negative connotation even if it is unintentional. Fuentes (2019) goes on to explain that the label made the participants of the study feel as though they were lacking in areas, not just academically when compared to students who were citizens. Having seen the flaws in English Proficiency tests and guidelines for qualifying, Niehaus and Adelson (2013) measured the level of proficiency in the English language determined by the Oral Language Development scale (OLDS) (Duncan & De Avila, 1998; Niehaus & Adelson, 2013). Furthermore, the concept of monolingual bias is apparent, and it appears that not much has been done to fix it in the universities (Zubrzycki, 2019). These studies call attention to the inequalities presented in the higher educational setting as well as the K-12 setting when it comes to individuals who are considered bilingual or multilingual.

Chen et al. (2019) conducted a study that looks specifically at self-identified bilingual college students as well as their relationships between openness to experience, cognitive flexibility, self-esteem (a more narrowed-down version of self-concept), and creativity. The article examines 284 bilingual students (63 males, 217 females, & 4 unreported) in a San Francisco community college setting. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that was administered to them online. The two research questions the study was interested in examining were (1) What are the relationship patterns among openness to experience, cognitive flexibility, self-esteem, and creativity in a sample of bilingual college

students in the U.S.? (2) Can cognitive flexibility and self-esteem mediate the relationship between openness to experience and creativity in this sample of bilingual college students in the U.S.? (Chen et al., 2019). Several scales were used including the big five personality questionnaire (to measure openness), the cognitive flexibility scale (to measure cognitive flexibility), the self-esteem scale (to measure self-esteem), and the Gough Personality Creativity Scale (to measure creativity). Except for the Gough Personality Creativity Scale (30 items), the other scales ranged from 10-15 items. Statistical analyses were conducted (Pearson's bivariate correlations) and the results from Chen et al., indicated: "gender had significant associations with self-esteem and creativity; age had significant associations with cognitive flexibility, self-esteem, and creativity; the indirect path from openness to experience through cognitive ability to creativity was significant; and the indirect path from openness to experience through self-esteem to creativity was not significant" (Chen et al., 2019). Another indirect path from openness to experience through both cognitive flexibility and self-esteem to creativity was significant and the total mediation explained 39% of the variance in creativity. The findings demonstrated that males have a higher level of creativity than females (slightly) and older individuals have a higher level in creativity.

Rather than looking at a narrow form of self-concept, Saraff et al. (2020) broke the topic into two different concepts. Their study examines first-year college students that are placed in three different groups (1- Control, 2- Treatment group 1, & 3- Treatment group 2). The intervention focused on developing positive self-concept, self-esteem, and a growth mindset. Therefore, there were three hypotheses of the study that include 1) Mindfulness as pedagogical intervention will have a significant effect on the self-concept of the students, 2) Mindfulness as pedagogical intervention will have a significant effect on self-esteem of the students, and 3)

Mindfulness as pedagogical intervention will have a significant effect upon growth mindset of the students. The study was a quasi-experimental research study that included a pre-test/post-test design. The intervention consisted of twelve one-hour sessions of discussion/exercises based on meditation. The sample consisted of 450 undergraduate students (ages 19-20) and approximately 150 students were placed into the three groups. When examining measures for this study, three measures were used: the Intelligence Mindset Scale (Dweck et al, 1995), Adolescents' Self-concept Short Scale (ASCSS) (Veiga & Leite, 2016), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. All items on these measures were on a Likert scale. Data analyses that were conducted were a t-test as well as a correlational analysis. The results indicated that there was a significant increase in all three areas in treatment group two when compared to the control group. There were several limitations of the article that should be discussed. The effect of intelligence on the relationship between the two methods should be considered as the role of the university environment, and the peer factor may act as an intervening variable. It may also be difficult to generalize this study to other populations since only Indian students were examined. Additionally, pre-test (testing effect) may have impacted the internal validity of the study.

Though there are several studies that give us more insight on self-concept, it is possible to broaden this concept into something more relevant and narrower.

Academic Self-Concept

Calero et al. (2013) states that academic self-concept underlines the importance of a student's development both socially and emotionally. It is defined as a student's self-perception concerning specific academic domains or abilities (Trautwein et al., 2006). Thus, the development is covering a student's self-efficacy skills as it relates to their achievement in the academic environment (Calero et al., 2013). The researchers of the study gave a survey to 222

ninth-grade students from New York where 99 of the participants self-identified as Hispanic. The study was a quantitative study with the use of structural equation modeling between academic self-concept (dependent variable) and the independent variables that included family academic expectations, peer relationships, schoolwork, and student-teacher relationships. Cronbach's alpha is presented as follows: student-teacher relationships (.675), peer relationships (.863), family academic expectations (.795), academic self-concept (.676), and schoolwork (.844). Unfortunately, the internal consistency presented via Cronbach's alpha should be higher in order to have stronger reliability. Calero et al. (2013) fails to provide the exact number of questions for each variable within their survey. The reason that is important is that it may answer questions on why the reliability is significantly lower for student-peer relationships and academic self-concept but higher in the schoolwork variable as well as peer relationships. Ultimately, the findings of the study found through a multiple regression analysis that three out of the four independent variables (excluding student-teacher relationships) were considered significant predictors of a student's academic self-concept. Moreover, the independent variable, peer relationships, was found to be a modifying variable of academic self-concept. Calero et al. (2013) make it worth noting that multiple regressions do not imply causality with the findings presented; nonetheless, they offer suggestions for improvement in the academic setting. Since their findings demonstrated a connection between academic self-concept and family academic expectations, Calero et al. (2013) suggest that faculty create a collaborative relationship with the student's families to potentially increase academic success and overall academic self-concept.

Though academic self-concept is a branch of the variety of topics that make up self-concept it is important to examine this specific type within the monolingual and bilingual student community. As students, academic success is vital for success and at times can feel like a

definition of character for these individuals. With that being said, it is important to factor in these findings and this community when studying overall self-concept.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review is to examine studies of self-concept among both monolingual and bilingual students. Moreover, the literature introduces an important subtopic within self-concept known as academic self-concept and why its findings under this subtopic are relevant to monolingual and bilingual self-concept. Additionally, previous research reveals ideal forms of method collection. Many studies have utilized qualitative methods as a form of data collection; however, the findings found via quantitative and mixed methods have proved useful as well.

Self-concept is a widely studied topic; yet, it appears that there is minimal literature that looks at how the number of languages spoken may affect how an individual views themselves as well as their success in key environments, such as the academic environment. More often than not, self-concept is examined within these two groups; yet it is rarely ever the highlight of the study. As a result, the literature that has been focused on this topic is limited and only focuses on certain groups such as Hispanic and Korean populations. Therefore, reviewing the literature allows for new ideas and concepts to be explored that might not have been discovered prior to review.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To address the research question, this study has employed a comparative design that has been used to examine levels of self-concept between monolingual individuals and bilingual/multilingual undergraduate students. The study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that all ethical guidelines were met.

Participants

The study aimed to examine potential differences between monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals. The accessible population included individuals who are considered monolingual and bilingual/multilingual. Thus, the target population consisted of individuals between the ages of 18:00-22:11 years old and either monolingual or bilingual/multilingual. For the study, only a sample of the target population was examined rather than the entire population. The type of sampling that was used in the study was a sample of convenience. The reason for using convenience sampling is based on who is accessible or expedient: monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals which are considered representative of the topic of interest (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). For this reason, the study required this criterion to be met to participate in the study. In addition, the study focused on individuals who are monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals rather than classes or districts. In this study, the individual's college status played a factor when considering who is eligible for participating. The reason behind this decision is to better understand the "individualistic" experience. After conducting a power analysis through the software G-Power (2023), the researcher determined that a sample size of 102 participants was needed for the following comparative design with each group consisting of 51 participants. In order to gather a

sufficient sample size, the researcher contacted and connected with undergraduate classes at a university in Central California via email and in person. The examiner did not acquire the sufficient sample size due to the exclusion of participants that will be mentioned further in the study. By not having the estimated sample, it became difficult for the researcher to generalize the populations being examined as well as make accurate comparisons between the two groups. As mentioned previously, the sample was divided into two subgroups: monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals. No data was collected before IRB approval.

The online survey was posted on the university's forums, professor's canvas site, social media (e.g., Reddit and Instagram), and the researcher entered seven classrooms to encourage participation. Participants had the option to exit the survey at any time or opt not to participate at all. This was directly stated in the informed consent portion of the survey and reiterated in person when the researcher entered the classrooms. A total of 179 participants began the survey, 97 undergraduate participants qualified and completed the survey (n=98). Of the 97 undergraduate participants, there were 67 females (69.1%) and 30 males (30.9%) (Gender: 1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Prefer not to say) (see Table 1) between the ages of 18-22 (Age: 1 = 18, 2 = 19, 3 = 20, 4 = 21, 5 =22, 6 = 23+) (see Table 2).

Table 1

Sample Demographics of Participants-Gender

Category	*N*	*%*
Male	67	69.1%
Female	30	30.9%

Table 2

Sample Demographics of Participants-Age

Category	*N*	*%*
Age 18	45	46.4%
Age 19	16	16.5%
Age 20	19	19.6%
Age 21	10	10.3%
Age 22	7	7.2%

Participants were then asked to name their undergraduate institution of attendance (University of the Pacific or Other). If the option of "Other" was chosen, the participant was then asked to write the name of the undergraduate institution they currently attend. Of the participants, 90 (92.8%) attended the University of the Pacific and 7 (7.2%) attended an undergraduate institution in California (see Table 3).

Table 3

Sample Demographics of Participants – Undergraduate Institution of Attendance

Category	*N*	*%*
University of the Pacific	90	92.8%
Other	7	7.2%

As a part of the demographics portion of the online survey, participants were asked to state their ethnicity (Ethnicity: 1 = White Non-Hispanic, 2 = Hispanic, 3 = Pacific Islander/Asian, 4 = Alaskan Native/Native American, 5 = African American/Black, 6 = Other). Of the participants, 25 (25.8%) identified as White Non-Hispanic, 33 (34%) identified as Hispanic, 31 (32%) identified as Pacific Islander/Asian, 5 (5.2%) identified as African American/Black, and 3 (3.1%) identified as Other (see Table 4).

Table 4

Sample Demographics of Participants-Ethnicity

Category	*N*	*%*
White non-Hispanic	25	25.8%
Hispanic	33	34%
Pacific Islander/Asian	31	32%
African American/Black	5	5.2%
Other	3	3.1%

Instrumentation

Since the study is a quantitative comparative design, the variables that were studied are the grouping variable of language status due to the researcher's interest in examining differences in their levels of self-concept instead of determining causality.

ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment

The following instrument that was used to measure an individual's language proficiency for the study was the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment created by the Interagency

Language Roundtable (ILR). The ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment (2013) was initially designed to be a tool to measure the linguistic proficiency of United States government employees. The intent of the self-assessment instrument was not to criticize one's language proficiency but rather to help these individuals understand what level they are able to interact directly with people with limited English proficiency. The instrument offers three brief assessments in the areas of listening, reading, and speaking. Each questionnaire goes by levels and each level has a series of questions within it. The questionnaire contains a total of 90 questions. The participant is tasked with reading the questions and answering either "Yes" or "No" to the statement. If they answer yes to the statement in the level, then they move on to the next level. Once a participant answers no to a level they discontinue the assessment. This measure allows the examiner to determine what level of proficiency the participants have in their second language. During the construction of the survey, the researcher decided that the ILR should be given to each participant twice to ensure that individuals were proficient in at least one language. By making this decision, the researcher could ensure that the participants were truly monolingual or bilingual. After a careful review of the literature, it appeared that the literature has been lacking proper language proficiency instruments for adults. Therefore, the examiner determined that the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment (2013) was the most appropriate instrument for this study.

Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (Piers-Harris 3)

The instrument that was used to measure an individual's self-concept for the study was the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (Piers-Harris 3), Third Edition created by Piers et al. (2018). The Piers-Harris 3 was designed as a self-report measure for individuals between the ages of 6-22 to ask 58 yes or no questions that measure self-concept. The instrument collects nine scores:

Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), the total of all these scores (TOT), and two validity scales (Response Bias & Inconsistent Responding). The reason for choosing this instrument for the study is because it inspects other aspects that relate to self-concept. The construct of self-concept is complex and to have one single score obtained would make it an insufficient tool. Additionally, obtaining a single score to measure self-concept would disregard other factors that may be taking place for the participants in the study. To find the best instrument to assess self-concept, the researcher investigated the University of the Pacific's (UOP) library database, specifically the Mental Measurements Yearbook. After comparing several promising instruments, the researcher determined that the Piers-Harris 3 was the best choice to use when moving forward with the study. The instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability, containing alpha coefficients that are considered adequate. Scores ranged from acceptable to excellent: BEH (.75), FRE (.78), HAP (.78), INT (.77), PHY (.76), SOC (.80), and TOT (.92). The Piers-Harris 3 examined construct and concurrent validity. This instrument was further compared to other popular instruments known as the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Second Edition (TSCS 2, 1988), and the Risk Inventory and Strengths Evaluation (RISE, 2019). To present concurrent evidence of validity, the TSCS and the Piers-Harris 3 were administered to a sample of thirty-four individuals (N=34). Moreover, another administration was conducted between the RISE and Piers-Harris 3 to a sample of forty-seven participants (N=47). The TSCS:2 and the seven subscales on the Piers-Harris 3 yielded low to moderate concurrence while the RISE and Piers-Harris 3 yielded moderate concurrence (Sink & Wright, 2021). Though conducting these studies showed that the Piers-Harris demonstrated concurrent validity findings,

the researcher did consider that the sample size was smaller than expected. Furthermore, the Piers-Harris 3 relates more to the topic of Self-Concept than RISE and has an adequate standardization sample that is representative of the U.S population in terms of gender, SES status, race/ethnicity, and geographic region (Sink & Wright, 2021).

Procedures

Once IRB approval was obtained, the researcher conducted the study via an online survey and recruited participants by attending undergraduate classes, social media, survey flyers, and contacting professors from other undergraduate institutions in California. The online survey contained a total of 178 questions. These questions included consent for participation, demographic questions, the Piers-Harris 3, and the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment. To ensure consistency among measures, both the Piers-Harris 3 and the ILR utilized yes or no responses. The online survey was available to be administered to identified participants online for a time frame of six weeks. Since the experiment is a nonexperimental comparative design, the researcher has taken several steps to minimize threats to validity. The main threats to the study were low statistical power, maturation, selection of subjects, and characteristics of subjects. To avoid low statistical power, the researcher made sure that the time frame was reasonable for the upcoming winter break. Although the researcher was not expecting to remove a large number of participants that will be discussed in Chapter 5. To avoid the effects of a maturation threat, the examiner used a smaller age range of who can participate in the study. The Piers-Harris 3 can be used for individuals between the ages of 6-22, however, there would be a clear disparity between experiences and the scores overall. Therefore, the study has strictly focused on undergraduate individuals between the ages of 18:00-22:11. Due to the type of design, some threats were unavoidable for the study such as the selection of subjects and

characteristics of subjects. Some ways to avoid these threats to external validity would be to investigate replicating the study to other populations in the future to maximize generalizability and collect demographic information on the participants' backgrounds to examine what they may vary on. Moreover, the researcher used the Inconsistent Responding index offered by the Piers-Harris 3. The Inconsistent Response (INC) index was used to recognize patterns in responses that may pose a threat to validity including administrator error and respondent issues (e.g., motivation, understanding questionnaire items, etc.). The Piers-Harris 3 also has another validity scale known as the Response Bias index. The Response Bias (RES) index identifies a participant's tendencies to agree or disagree with Piers-Harris's 3 items. In other words, a higher RES index indicates a positive response bias, and a lower RES indicates a negative response bias. However, the researcher decided to opt out of using the RES because they were more interested in the consistency of the participant's completion of the Piers-Harris 3.

Participants were also asked to complete the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment (listening, speaking, and reading) in English and in their second language if applicable. Participants started the ILR at level 3 which would demonstrate professional working proficiency. To pass the level, participants needed to mark at least one question as yes (ILR: 1 = Yes and 2 = No). If the participant only completed the ILR once and passed at least two domains, they were automatically considered for the monolingual group. A participant could be considered bilingual for this study if they passed at least two of the domains on their second time completing the ILR, such that they completed the ILR for 2 different languages. If the participant stated that they spoke a second language but did not pass two of the three domains, the participant would then be considered part of the monolingual sample.

Participants were exited from the survey once they answered no to a question on this measure with the exception of the reading domain which required two answers of no to be exited. The researcher made this specific decision because reading tends to be the most difficult to master when compared to speaking and listening. Nevertheless, the purpose of the design was not to uncover causal relationships but rather to investigate differences between the two groups being studied.

Data Analysis

Before the main analysis, the researcher conducted several descriptive statistics. This would include descriptive statistics for self-concept as reported by female and male participants who are monolingual or bilingual regarding the nine scores (see Table 5) and total score (see Table 6) on the Piers-Harris 3. To answer the following research question, a MANOVA has been used to analyze the six subscales of self-concept (see Table 8 for RQ#1). To analyze the total self-concept score (TOT), the researcher used an ANOVA (see Table 9 for RQ#1). A MANOVA would be the most appropriate test to use because it allows the researcher to reduce the possibility of a Type 1 error. Furthermore, by performing a MANOVA, the researcher was able to determine if there is an interaction between language status and gender (see Table 4). Additionally, the researcher intends on performing an ANOVA to test differences between all groups examined and make more accurate probability statements over conducting multiple t-tests (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

Table 5

Descriptive statistics for self-concept as reported by female and male participants (Monolingual or Bilingual) regarding the nine scores gathered from the Piers-Harris 3 (RQ#1)

Self-Concept	Gender	LangStatus	*M*	*SD*	N
Social Acceptance	Male	Monolingual	39.8000	6.14352	15
		Bilingual	38.6667	5.92412	15
		Total	39.2333	5.95780	30
	Female	Monolingual	39.2727	5.55806	33
		Bilingual	40.1875	4.79541	32
		Total	39.7231	5.17659	65
	Total	Monolingual	39.4375	5.68651	48
		Bilingual	39.7021	5.16643	47
		Total	39.5684	5.40814	95
Freedom from Anxiety	Male	Monolingual	48.0667	7.10600	15
		Bilingual	46.2000	7.62702	15
		Total	47.1333	7.30486	30
	Female	Monolingual	40.9394	9.27004	33
		Bilingual	42.5625	6.83415	32
		Total	41.7385	8.13994	65
	Total	Monolingual	43.1667	9.20299	48
		Bilingual	43.7234	7.21924	47
		Total	43.4421	8.24197	95
Happiness & Satisfaction	Male	Monolingual	31.0000	3.76070	15
		Bilingual	30.4000	4.17133	15
		Total	30.7000	3.91417	30
	Female	Monolingual	28.6970	3.54863	33
		Bilingual	30.1250	4.76377	32
		Total	29.4000	4.21975	65
	Total	Monolingual	29.4167	3.73502	48
		Bilingual	30.2128	4.53937	47
		Total	29.8105	4.14958	95
Physical Appearance & Attributes	Male	Monolingual	32.7333	8.17196	15
		Bilingual	32.6667	6.99660	15
		Total	32.7000	7.47479	30
	Female	Monolingual	32.7879	7.31333	33
		Bilingual	32.3437	6.16760	32
		Total	32.5692	6.72442	65
	Total	Monolingual	32.7708	7.50387	48
		Bilingual	32.4468	6.36843	47
		Total	32.6105	6.93019	95
Behavioral Adjustment	Male	Monolingual	48.7333	6.06473	15
		Bilingual	46.2000	7.05286	15
		Total	47.4667	6.59014	30

(Table 5 Continued)

	Female	Monolingual	46.7879	6.98551	33
		Bilingual	49.0938	7.73913	32
		Total	47.9231	7.39997	65
	Total	Monolingual	47.3958	6.70896	48
		Bilingual	48.1702	7.57375	47
		Total	47.7789	7.12230	95
Intellectual & School Status	Male	Monolingual	37.4000	8.41597	15
		Bilingual	35.6667	7.89816	15
		Total	36.5333	8.06753	30
	Female	Monolingual	36.0000	7.67708	33
		Bilingual	37.9688	7.42482	32
		Total	36.9692	7.56011	65
	Total	Monolingual	36.4375	7.85211	48
		Bilingual	37.2340	7.57057	47
		Total	36.8316	7.68343	95

Note. *p>0.5

Table 6

Descriptive statistics for self-concept as reported by female and male participants (Monolingual or Bilingual) regarding the total score gathered from the Piers-Harris 3 (RQ#1)

Self-Concept Total	LangStatus	Gender	*M*	*SD*	N
	Monolingual	Male	37.5333	3.97971	15
		Female	35.0303	4.83790	33
		Total	35.8125	4.69339	48
	Bilingual	Male	36.2667	4.36654	15
		Female	36.8125	3.19715	32
		Total	36.6383	3.57178	47
	Total	Male	36.9000	4.15518	30
		Female	35.9077	4.17853	65
		Total	36.2211	4.17485	95

Note. *p>0.5

Assumptions and Limitations

The purpose of the study is to expand on current literature on self-concept as well as monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals. Though the design is comparative, the researcher hopes to continue researching this topic and eventually be able to generalize the study to other populations. The study thus relied on several assumptions. The researcher is assuming that since the data from Piers-Harris 3 was completely anonymous, the participants in the study self-reported honestly. The researcher also assumed the homogeneity of variance between the six subscales that make up self-concept as seen on the MANOVA.

Though the study intends to examine differences in self-concept between monolingual and bilingual/multilingual individuals, several limitations arose. Though the study is quantitative in nature, it is considered non-experimental. Therefore, there is no control group or intervention present. By not having a control group or implementation of an intervention the researcher is unable to make causal conclusions based on the findings. Moreover, validity threats of low statistical power, maturation, selection of subjects, and characteristics of subjects were outcomes in the study. The researcher did intend on controlling for these threats; however, some were simply unavoidable.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The focal point of the following research study was to examine differences between self-concept and two variables: language status and gender. The following chapter will explain the sample demographics and analysis to answer the researcher's question presented in Chapter 1.

Demographics for Language Status

Once the researcher made the decision of who would be a part of each group (monolingual group and bilingual group), they were able to conduct the descriptive statistics for the study. Of the 97 participants, 49 (50.5%) were a part of the monolingual sample and 48 (49.5%) were a part of the bilingual sample (see Table 9).

Table 7

Sample Demographics of Participants-Language Status

Category	*N*	*%*
Monolingual	49	50.5%
Bilingual	48	49.5%

Participants were excluded from the overall study if they were over the age of 22, did not state their gender, weren't currently enrolled in an undergraduate program in California, and did not complete the entire online survey on Qualtrics. As mentioned prior, the Piers-Harris 3 is a measure that can only be used for ages 6 to 22 years of age. Therefore, individuals over the age of 22 did not qualify to be participants in this study. Participants over the age of 22 were still allowed to complete the survey but were removed when it was time to run the overall analysis.

Research Question 1

Is there a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT)?

To determine this difference, a MANOVA was chosen as the analysis of choice. A MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of language status and gender on the six dependent variables of Behavioral Adjustment, Freedom from Anxiety, Happiness and Satisfaction, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, and Social Acceptance. First, variables from the Piers-Harris were recoded to determine each respondent's final raw score. Once raw scores were obtained, these scores were transformed into t-scores. This process was conducted through SPSS where the raw scores were recoded to match the t-scores presented in the Piers-Harris Manual.

The Inconsistent Responding Index (INC) was used to eliminate participants who were inconsistent with their responses (e.g., I am popular → Yes and I am not popular →Yes). If participants inconsistently answered three or more questions they were removed. As a result, approximately 64 participants were removed from the final analysis due to inconsistent responses. The researcher opted to use Wilks' Lambda for the final analysis because the Box Test for Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance was not found to be significant.

MANOVA results indicate that language status (Wilks' Λ =.995, $F(6, 86)$ =.070, p=.999, n^2=.005) and gender (Wilks' Λ = .840, $F(6, 86)$ = 2.733, p = .018, n^2= .160) does not significantly affect the dependent variables of Behavioral Adjustment, Freedom from Anxiety, Happiness and Satisfaction, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes,

and Social Acceptance. (see Table 10). Due to the lack of significance, no follow-up tests were conducted.

Table 8

MANOVA Summary Table

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Wilks' Lambda	.007	1989.673	6.000	86.000	<.001	.993
LangStatus	Wilks' Lambda	.995	.070	6.000	86.000	.999	.005
Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.840	2.733	6.000	86.000	.018	.160
LangStatus * Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.965	.523	6.000	86.000	.790	.035

Note. *p>0.5

It should be noted that the researcher did discover that there was a significant difference among gender and the dependent variable of Freedom from Anxiety in the Piers-Harris 3. According to the analysis, the male participants from the study report less anxiety compared to female participants. However, this finding was not relevant to the overall research question presented above since there was no difference among monolingual and bilingual participants.

A Univariate ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in language status and gender on the dependent variable of each respondent's total t-score on the Piers-Harris. ANOVA results indicate that language status ($F(1,91)=.080$, $p=.778$, partial $n^2=.001$) and gender ($F(1,91)=1.151$, $p=.286$, partial $n^2=.012$) does not significantly affect the participant's total t-

score on the Piers-Harris (see Table 11). Due to the lack of significance, no follow-up tests were conducted.

Table 9

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	***SS***	***df***	***MS***	***F***	***p***	n^2
LangStatus	1.364	1	1.364	.080	.778	.001
Gender	19.656	1	19.656	1.151	.286	.012
LangStatus * Gender	47.697	1	47.697	2.792	.098	.030
Error	1554.511	91	17.083			
Total	126275.000	95				

Note. *p>0.5

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As we grow and develop, our self-concept is in constant transition. Our self-concept can be shaped by a variety of factors and events that take place in our lives. It is noteworthy to mention that self-concept is continuous not fixed. Therefore, one cannot make the inference that it is solidified by a certain time frame in our lives. However, I do believe that we can gain a better understanding of our self-concept as we age.

The following chapter will provide a summary of the overall study as well as conclusions that can be made from the data analysis. This chapter will also include the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research on this topic.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative comparative design was to examine differences in self-concept between monolingual individuals and bilingual/multilingual undergraduate students. Two instruments were used in this study, the Piers-Harris 3 and the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment. Due to the lack of research that examined language and self-concept together, this study not only contributed to the literature but also examined other factors that could contribute to the way we view ourselves. Additionally, this study examined the effects of monolingualism and bilingualism on the development of self-concept, offering people from a variety of differing language experiences to be explored. The purpose of the design was not intended to uncover causal relationships between language and self-concept but rather to investigate differences between the two groups being studied. The research question below was analyzed through SPSS software with a total of 97 participants.

RQ1: Is there a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT)?

a. H_0: There is no difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT).
b. H_a: There is a difference between monolingual and bilingual males and females in the self-concept areas of Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Social Acceptance (SOC), and Total Score (TOT).

A MANOVA and ANOVA were conducted to answer the above research question. The MANOVA was used to compare differences between language status and gender to the dependent variables Behavioral Adjustment, Freedom from Anxiety, Happiness and Satisfaction, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, and Social Acceptance. An ANOVA was used to compare differences between language status and gender to the dependent variable of each respondent's total t-score on the Piers-Harris known as the Total Score (TOT). Based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, there were no significant findings. As a result, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Though the findings from this study were found to be nonsignificant, the researcher did uncover an unexpected finding, as many participants in the study had low self-concept. According to the Piers-Harris manual (2018), a t-score between 45T-55T is considered Average. An average score indicates that the individual generally has a positive self-concept in the subscale areas examined. However, most participants in this study had self-concept scores between the Low Average (40T-44T) and Low (30T-39T) range, depicting lower self-concept. According to Slotter and Walsh (2017), transitions in life can disrupt the way a person views themselves and often impact them negatively. An example of a transition can be enrolling in an undergraduate program after high school. Even though enrolling in college can be an exciting transition period in one's life, it can also easily lead to feelings of stress, sadness, and fear of the unknown. When taking a closer look at the participants of this study, 45 of the 97 (46.4%) individuals reported being age 18. Moreover, it is possible that these low Piers-Harris scores stem from these individuals undergoing a period of transition and thus impacting their current self-concept. Since the researcher did not conduct a longitudinal study on the participants it is impossible to make a causal statement; however, it is something worth considering.

An additional factor that may have contributed to this unexpected finding is the wording of the items on the Piers-Harris 3, specifically for a college-educated population. Of the 58 questions, the higher the total score (TOT) one received, the “better” one’s self-concept was. Yet, a closer look at these yes or no questions made the researcher question whether they truly represented a lower self-concept. For example, the first question on this scale is “I am popular” and the participant has the option to choose between answering yes or no. If the participant answers yes, then that is one point toward a higher self-concept. Yet, the researcher argues that concepts such as popularity may not dictate a positive self-concept, and if a person does not

consider themselves popular that should not necessarily indicate a lower self-concept. The Piers-Harris Self-Concept scale tends to ask similar questions throughout the measure. These observations are not meant to invalidate the Piers-Harris 3 but rather, provide a possible explanation for the lower self-concept scores obtained in this study.

Another factor that may have contributed to these scores is the impact of COVID-19. Though the pandemic arose approximately five years ago, current studies have investigated how the lockdown measures enforced have affected individuals' well-being and self-concept (Alessandri et al., 2021; Brooks et al., 2020; Mukhtar, 2020). On February 28, 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom ended the COVID-19 State of Emergency in the state of California (Karlamangla, 2023). When the pandemic took place, the participants in this study ranged between the ages of 14-18. In other words, the participants most likely missed out on many social events (e.g., school dances, class field trips, everyday interactions with friends, school routines, etc.). By the time restrictions were lifted, these participants may have experienced actual isolation. Platforms like Zoom and Google Meet became the main forms of group communication not only in the university setting but also in the K-12 school setting.

Simply put, the high usage of technology replaced social opportunities. To reiterate, the participants from the study at the time were also undergoing another period of transition; becoming a teenager, navigating the COVID-19 world, and trying to figure out what comes after high school. It wouldn’t be surprising for any of these factors to be overwhelming for a developing adolescent brain and simultaneously impact self-concept.

Limitations

There is minimal literature that examines differences in self-concept based on language and as a result, the following study encountered several limitations. As a reminder, the study

conducted was non-experimental, therefore no causal conclusions could be made even if there was significance found in the data analysis. The main limitation encountered is the inability to generalize the study to other populations due to low statistical power. Before cleaning up the data, the researcher had 179 participants take part in the Qualtrics survey. Upon further examination, the researcher discovered that there were several participants who either did not complete the entire survey, attended an undergraduate program outside of California, or did not complete the survey due to responding in a way that made them ineligible to participate (i.e., indicating they were a robot) unintentionally.

Since the survey flyer, survey consent form, and the survey stated that the participant could discontinue at any point in the survey, this occurrence was not surprising. The examiner did attempt to account for the potential threat of maturation by starting participants at level three instead of level one for the ILR Language Proficiency Self-Assessment. Although, with the high number of questions, it is likely that participants could have experienced fatigue and discontinued the survey.

Additionally, the researcher was surprised that several individuals from states outside of California and other countries decided to complete the survey. This was due to the survey being posted on social media platforms. As mentioned prior, those participants were not included in the final analysis. Another incident that occurred was the researcher's double negative word choice at the beginning of the survey. To prevent robots from taking the survey, the researcher created a question that was intended to kick out any fake accounts. However, the researcher did not realize that the wording of the question was a double negative and would eventually confuse several participants (e.g., I am not a robot → yes or no). If a participant answered no to this question, Qualtrics would immediately discontinue the survey. Consequently, several real participants

were excluded from the survey and unable to complete it. These participants were also removed from the final analysis.

The Inconsistent Responding Index from the Piers-Harris 3 heavily assisted in controlling for the possibility of a Type 1 error. However, because the survey was completed anonymously and now follow-up or clarification could be asked of participants, any participant who met the threshold indicated in the Piers-Harris Manual for responding to items in an inconsistent manner were eliminated from the final analysis (64 participants), which also contributed to the threat of low statistical power. After carefully looking at the Piers-Harris, it is possible that some items marked as "inconsistent" may not be perceived in that way from a college student's perspective. For example, item six states, "I sit alone at lunch" and item 40 states, "I feel alone". According to the Inconsistent Responding Index, if a participant marked yes to item six and 40 as no then that would be noted as one point of inconsistency. However, it is possible that a college student may sit alone during their lunch out of choice and still feel that they have a community of people outside of the school setting. Another example is item 25, "I wish I were different" and item 51, "I like the way I am". One cannot deny the fact that any typical individual has insecurities. All things considered; an individual can like the way they are overall while simultaneously wishing some aspects of themselves were different.

Ultimately, the study included 97 participants in the final sample. In order to combat the likelihood of a Type 1 error and the threat of low statistical power moving forward, there should have been more participants who were able to pass the Inconsistent Responding Index and avoided potential confusion from the double negative question.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study contributed to the lack of research that examines the development of self-concept and the influence of language on its development. As individuals, we are constantly undergoing transitions and gaining a better understanding of our self-concept.

Further research should examine self-concept among older populations such as individuals enrolled in graduate school, generations such as Gen X (born between 1965-1980), and elderly individuals who can reflect on their self-concept over the years. It is vital to examine self-concept within older populations because most of the literature examines this during early childhood and adolescence. As mentioned previously, significant researchers such as Harter (2001), primarily focus on the formation of the self during early developmental periods. Though understanding what factors contribute to the formation of the self, it is also important to acknowledge the changes our self-concept go through as we age.

Researchers interested in self-concept may want to consider conducting a longitudinal design to look at self-concept over a longer time frame. This would allow for the researchers to not only examine the formations of the self but also how it has changed or stayed consistent throughout the years. A longitudinal study would be the study of choice over a cross-sectional design due to having an abundance of data on the self collected over a long period of time rather than at one specific period. Though participant dropout can occur, acquiring this data would allow for a more holistic view of self-concept.

Another idea for future research may be to study self-concept outside of California to examine differences among individuals in different states. The reason being that if there are notable differences between towns, imagine what customs look like from state to state (e.g., soda being referred to as pop in the Midwest). It is possible that there may be notable differences if a

similar study is conducted in states outside of the western region. All in all, future research should focus not only on language and self-concept but also on the factor of culture. These ideas may contribute to a better understanding of self-concept and potentially assist those who may have difficulty understanding who they are.

Conclusion

This study started with a single question that everyone has asked themselves several times throughout their lifetime, “Who am I”? It makes one decide whether to hold one’s self back or to take that leap into the unknown and discover more about the self. Language is everywhere and it allows individuals to form connections with others. The current study was intended to examine differences in self-concept development and language between monolingual and bilingual undergraduate students. Although no significant findings were uncovered in the final analysis, this study added to the literature on the development of self-concept and encourages future researchers to consider the impact of language development on the development of the self. The researcher hopes that this study will spark more questions as well as further expand our understanding of the role of language on the development of self-concept across the lifespan.

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