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Winter 3-2021

Social Contexts in Ethnic Identity Development: How Does it Affect Bicultural Stress Between Generations?

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Recommended Citation

Tran, C. (2021). Social Contexts in Ethnic Identity Development: How Does it Affect Bicultural Stress Between Generations?. Retrieved from <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/155>

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Bicultural stress is the unique stress which occurs when a bicultural individual tries to navigate between two different cultures, namely their heritage culture and mainstream culture. This study investigated bicultural stress using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model. Family, peers, community, and media were predicted to influence feelings of bicultural stress. This study recruited a sample of 147 undergraduate bicultural Canadians from the University of Windsor. Participants completed an online survey consisting of standardized self-report measures and open-ended questions. Results were analyzed using statistical analyses and a thematic analysis.

Findings from this study provided a detailed and complex illustration of the bicultural Canadian experience. This study found that second-generation Canadians experienced more bicultural stress compared to their third-generation peers. The regression analysis indicated that ethnic identity, family cultural socialization towards heritage culture, perceived discrimination, and generational status contributed to feelings of bicultural stress. Results from the thematic analysis indicated that bicultural Canadians shared a bicultural experience. Participants in this study realized their bicultural identity at a young age and found ways to navigate their bicultural identity as they grew up. Lastly, this study revealed participants' experiences of name-based microaggressions and the solutions that were developed to avoid these microaggressions.

Findings from this study revealed personal and intimate experiences with which bicultural Canadians have struggled in different social environments of their lives. This study can open avenues of research on microaggressions experienced by bicultural Canadians in school and workplace settings.