

Lived experiences of second-generation immigrant students: Integrating cultural and ethnic backgrounds

Maduomethaa Pathmaraj, HBSc Candidate & Kosha Bramesfeld, PhD Department of Psychology, University of Toronto Scarborough

BACKGROUND

As of 2016, there are **6.1 million Canadians** who are second-generation immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Second-generation immigrants have an **intersectional identity** where they maintain their own cultural heritage and that of the larger societal group (Berry & Hou, 2019).

Second generation immigrants who have a **strong sense of belonging** to both their ethnic group and Canada have higher life satisfaction and mental health (Berry & Hou, 2017).

Students from racialized groups can experience **barriers** to education and opportunities (Baum & Flores, 2011).

Research finds that high diversity content about ethnicity, race, and background within classrooms can **foster new-perspectives and confidence** when engaging with peers (Lee et al., 2012).



PURPOSE

This study aims to evaluate this intersectional identity (Canadian and Ethnic Minority Background) on **lived experiences** regarding identity, stressors, misconceptions and representation for this specific community of students.

Additionally, this research aims to accurately highlight the experiences of second-generation immigrants to help inform **educational tools and resources**.



METHODS

-  Twenty-six undergraduate students
-  Preliminary demographic and self-advocacy questionnaire
-  Small focus group discussions on their intersectional identity
-  Post-discussion questionnaire on focus group experience
-  Qualitative data coded (two-coders) based on transcripts from participants
-  Overlapping and emerging themes discussed with other coder

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

This research can inform creating future interventions to help integrate and support second-generation immigrant students on campus through many domains such as:

- Fostering a multicultural **campus community** that embraces diversity to improve integration of social identity
- Offering students support through both **student and faculty mentors** to promote discussion about opportunities regarding education, and employment
- Having greater **financial and educational support** for students (ie. grants, workshops and educational programs)
- Greater representation in classrooms through **group discussions, and course content** on these social identities
- Informing the development of an accurate **educational tool** through highlighting student feedback

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

- Identity Formation**
 - Students reported their identity reflects the hard work of their immigrant parents
 - Growing up in a multicultural community made integration of their social identity easier into the mainstream culture
 - For others, cultural differences between their parents impacted their identity growing up
- Challenges: Stressors & Misconceptions**
 - Students reported stressors around opportunities, education, occupations and financial situations
 - They voiced misconceptions about language, autonomy in education, and cultural background regarding their respective identities
- Importance of Representation**
 - Many students reported not hearing about their social identities within their university classrooms
 - Students expressed the need for an accurate representation of this intersectional identity across disciplines through professors, course content, or open discussions
- Educating Others**
 - Students want others outside this intersectional identity to acknowledge their privileges, exhibit empathy and have an open mindset around different social groups
 - Students expressed that an educational tool should have realistic and holistic representation that is not stereotypical, while accurately highlighting intersectionality



Fostering Campus Community



Supports and Resources



Accurate Educational Tools



Mentorship Opportunities



Representation in Classrooms

REFERENCES

Baum, S., & Flores, S. M. (2011). Higher education and children in immigrant families. *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 171–193. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2011.0000>

Berry, J. W., & Hou, F. (2017). Acculturation, discrimination and wellbeing among second generation of immigrants in Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 61, 29-39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2017.08.003>

Berry, J. W., & Hou, F. (2019). Multiple belongings and psychological well-being among immigrants and the second generation in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 51(3), 159-170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000130>

Lee, A., Williams, R., & Kilaberia, R. (2012). Engaging diversity in first-year college classrooms. *Innovative Higher Education*, 37(3), 199–213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-011-9195-7>

Statistics Canada. (2019). *Intergenerational Education Mobility and Labour Market Outcomes: Variation Among the Second Generation of Immigrants in Canada*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019006-eng.htm#shr-pg0>