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"It's the Best of Both Worlds!": Investigating Bicultural Stress in Adult Bicultural Canadians

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Abstract: This study delves into the ecological factors that predict bicultural stress among bicultural adult Canadians while uncovering common themes surrounding their bicultural identity and developmental journey. A sample of bicultural Canadians (N = 147; 88% female, M_{age} = 20.72) participated in an online survey consisting of standardized self-report measures and open-ended inquiries about their bicultural experience. The study identified factors contributing to current levels of bicultural stress through regression analysis. Additionally, thematic analysis was conducted to explore participants' narratives about their bicultural experiences. Participants were of diverse racial/ethnic Canadian backgrounds (Middle Eastern, n = 50; East and Southeast Asian, n = 22; South Asian, n = 27; Black, n = 21; multiple ethnicities, n = 22; Latin, n = 5). The regression results demonstrated that ethnic identity, family cultural socialization towards heritage culture, perceived discrimination, and generational status contributed to feelings of bicultural stress. Thematic analysis revealed a developmental trajectory encompassing participants' realization of their bicultural identity, navigating bicultural stress, and cultivating an appreciation for their dual cultures. Findings suggest that bicultural individuals' interactions with their social environment may develop their bicultural identity towards more positive outcomes as they approach adulthood.
Keywords: biculturalism, bicultural stress, bicultural identity development, Canadian context.

Canadian multiculturalism unfolds the narrative of embarking on a new life in a different country. Early immigration to Canada was mainly from Europe until the 1960s, which marked a transformative shift towards increased diversity in subsequent decades. Major world events led to massive immigration from different parts of the world, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, in the 1970s; Caribbean and Bermuda in the 1980s; Hong Kong in the 1990s; People's Republic of China, India, and the Philippines in the 2000s (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2016). Statistics Canada (2016) states that most first-generation Canadians immigrate from Asia, including the Middle East. As of 2021, 26.4% of Canadians are first-generation immigrants, with second-generation Canadians comprising 17.6% of the population. Meanwhile, 56% of Canada's population consists of third-generation or more (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2023).

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A distinctive aspect of immigration lies in introducing one's culture from their homeland to Canada, encompassing elements such as style of dress, food, language, religion, values, assumptions, and attitudes. Each generation of Canadians may shape the next and encounter unique challenges related to their adjustment and sense of belonging in Canadian society. For instance, second-generation Canadians differ from their immigrant parents as they may grow up learning their parents' and Canadian cultures (Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). These two cultures may often diverge, requiring the individual to navigate between them. The process of learning both cultures makes the individual "bicultural."

A bicultural identity is a state in which an individual harmonizes two distinct cultural identities: that of their immigrant parents and the culture of their host country. Bicultural identity development is intricate, shaped by contextual factors, and multifaceted (Schwartz & Unger, 2010; Vedder & Phinney, 2014). During the process of forging a bicultural identity, individuals often encounter bicultural stress, which entails navigating the challenges and demands inherent in reconciling two distinct cultural worlds (McCord et al., 2019; Romero & Campen, 2011; Wei et al., 2019). Bicultural stress is understood to arise from various sources, including experiences of discrimination, family dynamics, linguistic challenges, and peer influences (Romero & Roberts, 2003b).

Current research underscores the significant implications of bicultural stress on the well-being of bicultural individuals, with links to adverse health outcomes such as depressive symptoms, diminished sleep duration, and decreased psychological well-being (Romero, Carvajal, et al., 2007; Sladek et al., 2020). Notably, previous investigations primarily focused on adolescent populations within the United States, mainly due to the pivotal role of ethnic identity formation during this developmental stage (Phinney, 1990; Schwartz et al., 2015; Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee et al., 2014). Consequently, studies involving adult samples remain scarce, and even fewer have examined the experiences of bicultural Canadians (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

This present study investigated the experiences of bicultural stress among bicultural Canadian adults. The study sought to understand the factors contributing to bicultural stress and identify potential shared patterns within the bicultural experience. Specifically, this study focused on second and third-generation bicultural Canadians.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's framework (1979, 1994) posits that an individual's psychological state evolves through engagement with and immersion within distinct environmental contexts. The *microsystem* is the first level and is the immediate environment in which the individual interacts. The second level is the *mesosystem,* or the connection between multiple microsystems. The *exosystem* refers to social structures that indirectly affect the child's development. The fourth level is the *macrosystem,* which involves the larger societal and cultural context surrounding the person. Later, Bronfenbrenner (1994) added a fifth level, the *chronosystem*, to account for how time and place may affect the developing person. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, these environmental levels collectively shape an individual's identity development.

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Bicultural Stress within Bicultural Canadians

Stressors that Shape Bicultural Stress

Negative Impacts of Having Ethnic First Names. Cila et al. (2021) argued that ethnic first names are "markers of cultural identity" (p. 308), offering insights into the social and cultural background of the name-bearer while also signifying a commitment to preserving one's heritage culture (C. A. Sue & Telles, 2007). Previous studies have highlighted the challenges that individuals with ethnic first names face in mainstream society. For instance, Bertrand and Mullainathan's (2004) field experiment revealed that résumés with a Western name received 50% more callbacks than those with ethnic first names. Moreover, Watson et al. (2011) found that job seekers with ethnic first names encountered fewer job opportunities than those with Western first names. Within academic spheres, Zhao and Biernat (2017) found that emails from senders with Western names requesting meetings with professors were more likely to receive replies than those from senders with ethnic names. In response to these challenges, individuals may engage in "résumé whitening" by downplaying racial cues in their résumé to avoid discrimination by employers (Kang et al., 2016, p. 474).

Family Cultural Socialization. First-generation parents place significant importance on transmitting their heritage culture to their children (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2015). They are selective in teaching and socializing their children the values, beliefs, and practices of their heritage culture (Schönpflug, 2009; Tam, 2015). For example, language is a cultural behavior that parents socialize with their children (Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). In particular, first-generation parents may encourage their second-generation children to attain English proficiency, viewing it as a means to enhance social mobility. Simultaneously, they emphasize the significance of retaining fluency in their heritage language to remain anchored within their culture (Brown, 2011). Additionally, communicating with parents and relatives in one's native language maintains bonds with their family and surrounding communities (Mills, 2001).

Peers' Cultural Socialization. To foster a sense of belonging, bicultural individuals navigate different cultures and must decide which aspects of their cultures they should shed or keep (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). Many bicultural individuals try to avoid the extremes of being too "FOB (fresh off the boat)" or too "white-washed" as each label carries accompanying social stigmas (Pyke & Dang, 2003). Bicultural individuals must find the "acceptable middle ground" to be considered "normal" to their peers (Pyke & Dang, 2003). Hence, peers may help define what they believe is an optimal middle ground for bicultural individuals.

Perceived Discrimination. Bicultural individuals can often encounter bicultural stress stemming from the perception of discrimination driven by their ethnic visibility. According to Godley (2018), the most common discrimination Canadians report is racial discrimination compared to other forms such as age, weight, religion, or income. As a result of racial discrimination, some bicultural Canadians believed "whiteness" to be an "invisible" requirement to being Canadian (Shin, 2016).

Media Portrayals. Media is crucial to stereotypes and prejudice against ethnic minority groups. Daha (2011) found that media portrayals and representations of ethnic minority groups shaped how participants viewed their group members and how others viewed them. For example, one study found that male Arab Americans faced a "hyper-visibility" following media coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Participants from the study reported fear of being reduced to a stereotype because of the media's negative portrayal of their ethnic group (Kumar et al., 2014). Positive stereotyping may also cause strain in interpersonal relations. For example, Asian Americans

frequently experience the “model minority” stereotype, causing identity struggles and pressure for success (Park, 2008; Son & Shelton, 2011). Thus, the media’s positive and negative portrayal significantly shapes the self-identity of bicultural individuals.

The Present Study

Research on bicultural stress has primarily focused on adolescent samples within the United States (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013; Sladek et al., 2020; Romero et al., 2020), leaving a significant gap in the literature regarding bicultural stress within the Canadian context. Furthermore, there is limited research on how bicultural individuals navigate their stress and develop an understanding of their identity as they age. The current study recruited adult bicultural Canadians from a Canadian university to address these gaps. This study used standardized self-report measures to identify the current influences of bicultural stress. Additional open-ended questions allowed participants to share their retrospective and present accounts of their bicultural experiences. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What factors, if any, contribute to bicultural stress in adult bicultural Canadians?
2. What common themes do adult bicultural Canadians share about their bicultural experiences?

Researcher Positionality

I (first author) am a second-generation Vietnamese Canadian woman and a first-generation student. My parents were among the Vietnamese boat people who fled Vietnam to seek refuge in the Philippines due to the challenges of war, poverty, and trauma. Despite these hardships, my parents showed remarkable resilience and eventually made their way to Canada, where my siblings and I were born.

Throughout my upbringing, I grappled with understanding my parents’ Vietnamese heritage while embracing Canadian culture. Often, I felt the tug-of-war between these two worlds, shaping my sense of identity. For example, my parents placed great importance on caring for my family. This cultural value designated me as their translator while I watched my peers and envied their freedom from such responsibilities.

Navigating through school years, I attempted to conceal my ethnic background, even opting for “Canadian” lunches over Vietnamese cuisine. English became dominant in our household conversations, despite my parents and grandmother’s pleas to remain connected to our Vietnamese roots. Paradoxically, despite being born in Canada, I struggled to embrace a sense of “Canadian” identity fully.

As an adult, I have come to terms with cherishing my Vietnamese and Canadian heritage. I unapologetically bring my mom’s cooking to school or work, embracing it with pride. I am more open to discussing and sharing part of my culture with peers. Although the responsibility of caring for my parents occasionally brings mild frustration, I finally understand it is my way of expressing gratitude in the Vietnamese tradition.

As a result, my positionality has significantly influenced the development of this study, impacting choices related to methods, participant selection, data collection, and analysis. The foundation of this study rests on my shared experiences with other second-generation bicultural Canadians. To capture their narratives, I incorporated open-ended questions to illuminate the emic perspectives of bicultural identities. The selection criteria for participants were individuals who

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shared similar bicultural identities to mine, such as being born in Canada and identifying as a visible minority. Given my insider understanding of the bicultural phenomenon, I needed to ensure that the interpretation of my analysis remained unbiased. I practiced reflexivity by noting my feelings after reading each response to address this concern. Moreover, I discussed my interpretations with my advisor (second author) and colleagues to ensure unbiased results.

While the foundation of this work lies in my thesis research, the co-authors have significantly contributed to the study's development and the interpretation of its findings. Each author brings extensive experience in working with culturally diverse populations. Their differing positionalities from mine played a crucial role in shaping the final interpretation of the findings. The second author is of English and French-Canadian descent and was a first-generation university student. She provided direct support in developing the study's methods and interpreting the findings. The third author is a Taiwanese Canadian of immigrant background who was educated in Canada and later in the U.S. He applied his extensive knowledge of culturally diverse research to provide valuable feedback on my methods and facilitate the interpretation of results. The fourth author is a third-generation Canadian of English descent. Her expertise in qualitative methods guided the final thematic analysis, resulting in a cohesive and comprehensive narrative.

Method

Participants and Procedure

One hundred forty-seven undergraduate participants were recruited from the university's psychology participant pool. Eligibility criteria encompassed self-identification as second or third-generation Canadian[2] and visible minority status[3]. Participants completed an online survey using Qualtrics. Participants of various ages were included to encompass the experiences of third-generation bicultural Canadians. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 54 (M = 20.72, SD = 3.87). Most participants were female (88%, $n = 129$). Canadians in this study identified as Middle Eastern (34.01%), South Asian (18.37%), East and Southeast Asian (14.97%), Black (14.29%), multiple ethnicities (14.97%), and Latina/o (3.40%).

Regarding bilingualism, 88% of participants reported the ability to understand their ethnic language ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.34$). Additionally, 47% reported being able to speak their ethnic language ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.46$), 24% could read their ethnic language ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.40$), and 14% could write in their ethnic language ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.34$). All participants were born in Canada and identified as second-generation (88%) or third-generation (12%) Canadians.

Participants received a point towards their eligible courses under the university's participant pool policies as compensation for their participation. All participants gave informed consent. The study received ethics approval from the institutional Research Ethics Board in the university where the authors are affiliated.

[2] The Government of Canada (2021a) defines second-generation Canadians as individuals born in Canada with at least one parent born outside Canada. For the most part, these are the children of immigrants. Third-generation Canadians are persons who were born in Canada with both parents born in Canada.
[3] In Canada, The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color" (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2021b).

Measures

Language Proficiency

The Language Proficiency and Language Use Scale (Berry & Sabatier, 2011) measured participants' bilingualism. It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (all the time) to measure an individual's extent of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in their ethnic language and national language (e.g., English). This scale was previously used by second-generation adolescents of Vietnamese, Korean, and South Asian descent, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .78 to .91 (Berry & Sabatier, 2011).

Cultural Socialization

The Cultural Socialization Scale (Y. Wang et al., 2015) assessed respondents' family and peer influences on their socialization toward their heritage and mainstream cultures. There are four subscales within the Cultural Socialization Scale: family socialization toward the heritage culture, family socialization toward the mainstream culture, peer socialization toward the heritage culture, and peer socialization toward the mainstream culture. Each item used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). An example item was, "My parents (or peers) encourage me to respect my cultural values and beliefs." Each subscale yielded high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .88 to .94 across different ethnic groups (Y. Wang et al., 2015).

Perceived Discrimination

The Perceived Discrimination Subscale from the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) measured participants' experiences of perceived discrimination from their surrounding community. It is an 8-item subscale, and each item uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale was scored by summing the responses. An example item was, "I am treated differently because of my race." This measure demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 obtained in a sample of international students (K. T. Wang et al., 2015).

Media Portrayal of Ethnic Groups

The primary author developed three items to measure attitudes toward media portrayals of ethnic groups. These items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Items from this scale asked whether media portrayals of one's ethnic group were positive, accurate, or reinforced stigma. An additional open-ended question asked participants to "please explain further" to examine their perceptions of media portrayals of their ethnic group.

Ethnic Identity Measure

The Revised (12-Item) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts et al., 1999) assessed individual differences in terms of how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much it affects their behavior. This scale has two subscales measuring affirmation/belonging (sense of group membership and attitudes toward the individual's group) and exploration (activities to learn about one's ethnic group) (Roberts et al., 1999). An overall

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score can be derived based on the mean of items across both subscales. Items were rated using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). An example item was "I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to." Items were rated using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). This measure demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .81 to .89 across different ethnic groups (Roberts et al., 1999).

Bicultural Stress Scale

The Bicultural Stress Scale (Romero & Roberts, 2003a; Romero, Martinez, et al., 2007) consisted of 20 items that address everyday stressors in school, peer, and family contexts. It measured participants' overall feelings of bicultural stress in the present study. Minor changes were made to the Bicultural Stress Scale: "Canadian" replaced "American," and "my native language" replaced "Spanish." An example item was, "I feel that I can't do what most Canadian kids do because of my parent's culture." Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (Never happened to me) to 5 (Very stressful).

Responses were re-coded during data analysis with "Never happened to me" coded as 0, "Not at all stressful" coded as 1, "A little bit stressful" coded as 2, "Quite a bit stressful" coded as 3, and "Very stressful" coded as 4 (Romero, Carvajal, et al., 2007). The original authors reported high internal consistency with European Americans ($\alpha = .94$), Latino Americans ($\alpha = .94$), and Asian Americans ($\alpha = .95$) (Romero, Carvajal, et al., 2007).

Assessment of Perception Towards One's Own First Name

Participants were asked for their first name and their preferred name. The primary author constructed three items to measure an individual's attitudes toward their first name. Items were rated using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A sample item from this measure was, "I believe that my first name does not affect how other people perceive me." In addition, participants were asked an open-ended question regarding their experiences with their first names.

Open-ended Questions

Participants responded to six open-ended questions about their retrospective and current bicultural experiences. Participants were asked about their experiences growing up as bicultural. To comprehensively capture their narratives, participants were prompted to reflect on their realization of their bicultural identity, recount both positive and negative experiences, and describe elements of their heritage culture they either maintained or let go. Unlike previous research by Syed and Azmitia (2008), which focused on narratives about friends triggering ethnic awareness, the current study did not specify particular groups to spotlight. Instead, participants were encouraged to share any influences shaping their bicultural identity.

Furthermore, participants responded to queries regarding their experiences tied to their first names and their perspectives on media portrayals of their ethnic group. These open-ended questions aimed to explore and identify shared themes across participants and their unique perspectives about their bicultural identity.

Data Analyses

SPSS version 23 and JASP version 0.14.00 were used to analyze the quantitative data with regression analyses. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses to the open-ended questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All data were treated confidentially and organized by participant number, apart from "first name" data.

Results

Table 1 illustrates each measure's scale means, standard deviations, and reliabilities. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .62 to .95 for each measure. The first name measure and English language proficiency scale were suboptimal regarding their reliability, respectively, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients < .70.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Scales and Subscales

Measure	Possible Range	Actual Range	*n*	*M*	*SD*	α
BSS	1 – 5	0.00 – 2.75	147	1.34	.61	.84
First name	1 – 7	5.00 – 21.00	147	11.03	3.81	.62
Language Proficiency						
Ethnic Language	1 – 5	1.00 – 5.00	147	2.87	1.18	.88
English Language	1 – 5	4.00 – 5.00	147	4.97	.12	.68
CSS						
FCS-HC	1 – 5	1.00 – 5.00	147	3.95	.79	.91
FCS-MC	1 – 5	1.00 – 4.17	147	2.99	.68	.71
PCS-HC	1 – 5	1.00 – 5.00	147	2.50	1.03	.95
PCS-MC	1 – 5	1.00 – 5.00	147	3.02	.68	.83
Perceived Discrimination	1 – 5	8.00 – 39.00	147	21.31	7.26	.90
MEIM	1 – 4	1.92 – 4.00	147	3.18	.50	.88
Media	1 – 6	3.00 – 15.00	147	7.12	2.96	.71

Note. BSS = Bicultural Stress Scale; CSS = Cultural Socialization Scale; FCS-HC = Family Cultural Socialization – Heritage Culture; FCS-MC = Family Cultural Socialization – Mainstream Culture; PCS-HC = Peer Cultural Socialization – Heritage Culture; PCS-MC = Peer Cultural Socialization – Mainstream Culture; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

Factors that Contribute to Bicultural Stress

RQ1: What factors, if any, contribute to bicultural stress in adult bicultural Canadians?

Table 2 presents the intercorrelations between each set of measures. Predictor variables were chosen based on their correlations with the outcome measure, bicultural stress, with only correlations greater than .10 included in the regression. A multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the influences of different stressors on bicultural stress. The predictors encompassed ethnic identity, first name, language proficiency, family and peer culturalization, perceived discrimination, media representation, and generational status. The final regression model is presented in Table 3.

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Table 2

Inter-Correlations among Study Measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. BSS	-	.30***	.03	.04	.11	-.07	-.08	.10	.40***	-.13	-.14	-.24**
2. First name		-	.08	.01	.16	-.14	.04	.09	.28***	-.02	-.06	-.18*
Language Proficiency												
3. Ethnic Language			-	.02	.48***	.17*	.42***	.16	-.01	.38***	.03	-.07
4. English language				-	.08	.06	-.08	.09	-.14	.001	-.005	.004
CSS												
5. FCS-HC					-	-.04	.40***	.17*	-.07	.45***	-.13	-.19*
6. FCS-MC						-	.08	.30***	-.05	.15	.01	.20*
7. PCS-HC							-	.16	.12	.45**	-.08	.02
8. PCS-MC								-	-.04	.20*	-.21**	-.03
9.Perceived									-	.02	-.09	-.005
Discrimination												
10. MEIM										-	-.26***	-.04
11. Media											-	-.008
12. Generational Status												-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p <.001$

BSS = Bicultural Stress Scale; CSS = Cultural Socialization Scale; FCS-HC = Family Cultural Socialization – Heritage Culture; FCS-MC = Family Cultural Socialization – Mainstream Culture; PCS-HC = Peer Cultural Socialization – Heritage Culture; PCS-MC = Peer Cultural Socialization – Mainstream Culture; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

The regression model for bicultural stress was significant, $R^2 = .30$, F (6, 140) = 10.17, $p < .001$. The variables that made significant unique contributions to the prediction of bicultural stress accounted for 4% to 15% of the variance. They were perceived discrimination ($sr^2 = .15$), ethnic identity ($sr^2 = .07$), generational status ($sr^2 = .05$), and family cultural socialization towards heritage culture ($sr^2 = .04$).

Table 3
Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Bicultural Stress

Predictor Variable	***β***	***t***	***sr²***	***R²***
				.30
MEIM	-.27	- 3.24*	.07	
First name	.12	1.5	.02	
FSC-HC	.19	2.26*	.04	
Perceived Discrimination	.37	5.01**	.15	
Media	-.14	-1.95	.03	
Generational Status	-.19	-2.49*	.05	

Note. $N = 147$; * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$
FSC-HC = Family Cultural Socialization – Heritage Culture

Bicultural Canadian Experiences

RQ2: What common themes do adult bicultural Canadians share about their bicultural experiences?

A reflexive thematic analysis identified the common themes bicultural Canadians shared about their overall bicultural experience. Initial codes were generated from the responses, and themes were identified, reviewed, defined, and named (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three broad themes emerged from the thematic analysis: feeling different, feeling conflicted, and the best of both worlds. Each theme has multiple subthemes. Table 4 summarizes each theme and examples of representative quotes from participants' responses.

Feeling Different

"Feeling different" refers to the experience of being aware of one's perceived differences compared to those around them, such as comparing oneself to others, experiencing racial microaggressions, and the awareness of media's stereotypical portrayals of one's ethnic group. Participants realized their bicultural identity around 4 to 5 years old, the average age for a child to attend kindergarten in Ontario (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2015). A few participants first experienced feeling bicultural during their teenage years. It is worth noting that these participants mentioned that they went to a predominantly white school where they were the visible minority.

Self-comparison to others. In this subtheme, participants reported feeling different when comparing themselves to their peers at school. Some participants mentioned being the only visible minority in their class. Participants also discussed how they compared their parents to their peers' parents, noting that they grew up in an "ethnic household" where their parents encouraged them to speak their native language at home and English at school. One participant observed how their

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mother "looked, acted, and spoke differently" than other children's parents, while others recognized that their immigrant parents heavily influenced their upbringing at home. These experiences indicate that bicultural Canadians were aware of their differences from a young age.

Racial microaggressions. This subtheme details the various racial microaggressions bicultural Canadians faced daily. One common experience shared by participants related to their school lunch, as their peers questioned and commented negatively about the food from their heritage culture. Participants recalled their peers describing their food as "weird" or "odd." As a result, participants requested their parents to pack Canadian food for lunch.

Moreover, participants shared experiences of microaggressions based on their names. Some participants felt the need to make things easier for others by adopting a nickname or a Westernized name, while others internalized negative feelings about their first name. Participants with an ethnic first name faced difficulties with peers, colleagues, teachers, and employers who found their names too "difficult" to pronounce. Racial microaggressions increased feelings of internalized racism in bicultural Canadians (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

Media's reinforcement of stereotypes. Participants believed the media promoted stereotypes and portrayed inaccurate representations of their ethnic group, which affected how others treated them. Participants shared their personal experiences of mistreatment they felt was influenced by media depictions. For example, some Muslim participants were bullied at a young age because the media constantly labeled the Muslim population as "terrorists." Black Canadians reported discontent about the media's selectiveness in reporting Black achievements. More recently, Asian Canadians mentioned experiencing anti-Asian racism, in which people blamed them for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Feeling Conflicted

This theme represents the experience of bicultural stress. These bicultural Canadians navigated between their heritage and Canadian cultures as they aged. Bicultural individuals faced close-minded values, their parents' strict parenting style, and restrictions on personal freedoms. They realized that their heritage and Canadian cultures sometimes conflicted with one another.

A desire for independence. Bicultural Canadians expressed a strong desire for independence reflected in their decision-making processes regarding romantic relationships, wanting to move out, choosing education, and using recreational drugs. Some participants believed their parents restricted them from pursuing the things they wanted to do. To avoid conflict with their parents, some participants refrained from discussing sensitive topics that could lead to arguments.

It is worth noting that the struggles experienced by second-generation participants in this study differed from those of the third-generation participants. For example, a third-generation participant shared that she did not experience any struggles with her parents since they were well-adapted to Canadian society. The results highlight how the struggles of bicultural Canadians may differ depending on factors such as generational status and level of cultural assimilation.

A desire to belong. This subtheme represents the conflict bicultural Canadians faced when trying to find where they fit in society. One participant received criticism from his heritage community when he expressed Canadian pride. Another participant was told she was not a "real" African because she was born in Canada. To deal with internalized racism, bicultural Canadians in this study revealed their need to find a "middle ground." Participants engaged in behaviors by trying to assimilate. For example, they removed ethnic cues about themselves, such as changing their hairstyles and style of dress to fit in. Moreover, participants who experienced name-based

microaggressions wished they had a Westernized name instead, and some reported giving themselves a more mainstream nickname as a coping strategy.

Cultural distancing. Participants reported aspects of their heritage culture that they did not wish to maintain. Various participants did not want to keep the "closed-mindedness" from their heritage culture. Some participants chose not to carry on the same parenting style for their children in the future (Domenech et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2008). Participants expressed difficulty maintaining traditional customs, especially if they appeared to be "outdated," such as arranged marriages.

Best of Both Worlds

Despite the experience of bicultural stress, some participants labeled their bicultural experience as the "best of both worlds." Participants described the "best of both worlds" as experiencing, integrating, benefiting, and learning about both their ethnic culture and Canadian culture. Four subthemes depicted the "best of both worlds."

Cultural bridges. Bicultural Canadians in the present study saw themselves as a bridge connecting their parents' immigrant culture to the broader Canadian society and vice versa. They forged these connections by using their bilingualism and sharing parts of their heritage culture with their peers. The act of cultural bridging can increase intercultural contact and, in turn, reduce cultural conflict between immigrant and Canadian communities (Khan & Bruschke, 2016). Previous research in community psychology has supported "bridging" in creating linkages between groups or communities (Townley et al., 2011). Moreover, bridging communities through shared resources and social connections can help foster a sense of community among diverse groups (Hughey & Speer, 2002).

Sense of personal development. Participants described their personal development in terms of increased open-mindedness. Through their bicultural experiences, participants better understood sensitive topics such as immigrants' feelings, hardships, and cultural differences. Bicultural Canadians in this study believed they are more empathetic due to their bicultural experiences.

This sense of personal development also shaped their relationship with their parents. Initially, participants reported conflict with their parents, but they eventually gained an increased appreciation for their parents' struggle during immigration. Several participants enjoyed learning about their parents' culture's history, traditions, values, and language. Being bicultural allowed them to learn and experience the unique culture in which their parents grew up.

Cultural Maintenance. The bicultural Canadians in this study wished to maintain the many components of their heritage culture. As young adults, they wished to maintain their heritage food, traditional clothing, hairstyles and natural hair, and unique jewelry. Additionally, many participants wished to maintain their language, described as "deeply rooted" in their culture. In addition to material aspects, participants favored emphasizing family and community values and shared that religion taught them values of compassion, humility, and love. A few participants did not want to maintain anything related to their heritage culture and reported "nothing" as their answer.

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Table 4
Bicultural Experience Themes

Themes	Examples
Feeling different	
Comparing self to others	When I started going to kindergarten, and noticed everyone was speaking English with their parents, whereas I was speaking my language with my mother and father when they would drop me off.
Racial microaggressions	Growing up many people thought my name was funny and (a) joke and often wondered why my parents would name me something like that. They failed to understand the cultural meaning and significance behind it and the beauty and reason my parents saw when choosing it.
Media's reinforcement of stereotypes	Although my ethnic group is diverse in many ways, we are constantly portrayed firstly as a group where everyone looks, acts, (and) talks the exact same way.
Feeling conflicted	
Desire for independence	My parents do not accept the fact that Canadian girls often move out to live with their boyfriend when they are in college/university and begin their life as a couple. My parents were very strict and demanded that I get marr(ied) first before I can actually move out and live with my boyfriend.
Desire to belong	Now while the majority of kids got sandwiches for lunch, I as a 5-year-old, would get rice with some kimchi and beef tips. I hated every lunch as a kid and although I loved the food my mother would pack for me. I just wanted to be like all the other kids.
Cultural distancing	I choose to not maintain the idea that refusing to show love to a child will set them up for success. Many Chinese parents place too much pressure on their children, calling it "tough love" . . . however, they do not consider the harmful mental health repercussions that will appear in the child's life in the future.
Best of both worlds	
Cultural bridges	I know English, French and Arabic. I can speak and understand my relatives. I can tour Lebanon. I can meet new people here in Canada if they speak Arabic as well. I have also helped many people in the airport and in a hospital because they could not speak English which made me feel really good and proud.
Sense of personal development	I'm more open-minded about differences and accepting others because I'm aware of my intersecting identity and understand that people don't fit into one, straight box.
Cultural maintenance	I choose to keep the values. Latin American culture is very family-oriented, as well as very influenced by religious beliefs. Although I am not very religious, the values that the church holds are based on love and compassion, which are things I value as well. I also choose to keep the language, the food, and other traditions.

Discussion

This study sought to understand the experience of bicultural stress in adult bicultural Canadians using the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). The first objective was to investigate the factors influencing bicultural stress using hierarchical regression analysis. Ethnic identity, family cultural socialization towards heritage culture, perceived discrimination, and generational status were significant predictors of bicultural stress within this study. The current findings suggest that bicultural individuals who experience perceived discrimination while having a weaker sense of ethnic identification towards their heritage culture are at risk of higher levels of bicultural stress (Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon et al., 2013). Additionally, levels of bicultural stress may vary between different generations.

The second objective was to investigate whether bicultural Canadians share a similar story about their bicultural experience. In this study, participants shared their realization of being bicultural, their struggles, and their growth. The current study found that shared experiences existed between bicultural groups, regardless of their ethnic identification. Many themes emerged and mapped onto shared experiences that had not previously been reported in the literature, such as one's experiences with the "best of both worlds."

Experiences with Racial Microaggressions

Although participants did not use "microaggression" to describe their experiences, the results revealed that name-based microaggressions from their teachers and peers impacted their sense of belonging at school (e.g., Abacioglu et al., 2019; Onyekwuluje, 2000; Solomon, 1997). *Microaggressions* are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (D. W. Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). The findings from this study aligned with previous studies on racial microaggressions within schools (Bailey, 2016; Beaulieu, 2016; Canel-Çinarbas & Yohani, 2019; Houshmand & Spanierman, 2021; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

Participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds experienced various forms of name-based microaggressions. For instance, a Middle Eastern Canadian participant recalled a moment when she walked across the stage to receive a medal for a science fair. The speaker, struggling to pronounce her name, added a dismissive "or something like that." Despite the celebratory nature of the event, this incident led to feelings of embarrassment for the participant.

Another example comes from a Latina Canadian participant who emphasized that her name serves as "a great indicator" of her heritage culture (Cila et al., 2021, p. 308), sparking numerous questions from her peers. She shared how people often made assumptions about her ethnic background based on her name. Even though she is not Mexican, she has received comments from people who mistakenly assumed her heritage.

Additionally, a Chinese Canadian participant revealed having both English and Chinese names. While her English name posed no issues, mentioning her Chinese name led to constant requests from peers to speak or write it. Consequently, she has felt discomfort about her Chinese name. These interactions collectively portrayed bicultural Canadians as feeling foreign in their own land (D. W. Sue et al., 2007). Each participant described these experiences as not only irritating but also annoying.

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A specific experience reported was how teachers and peers treated them differently because their names were deemed "too difficult" to pronounce. Participants who shared this experience were aware of avoidant behaviors from others, such as not being called on in class or at work. To cope with racial microaggressions, some participants created solutions to make things "easier," such as offering a nickname or providing a fake name during quick interactions. Some participants reported internalizing negative feelings about their names (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

While some participants chose to correct the mispronunciation of their names, others opted not to. One participant refrained from correcting her teacher because she wanted to prioritize their comfort in interacting with her inside and outside class. In this study, participants believed that their names reflected their ethnic identity. They felt that their identity was not being recognized when others avoided correctly saying their name (Trazo & Kim, 2019).

Accepting Bicultural Identity

In the face of discomfort and the challenges stemming from influences by peers, parents, and teachers, bicultural Canadians in this study recognized the merits of their bicultural identity. According to the current research findings, these participants embraced the "best of both worlds." Bicultural Canadians in this study became comfortable with their heritage culture despite feeling different or conflicted.

Adult bicultural Canadians in this study shared aspects of their heritage culture that they wished to preserve. Participants shared their appreciation for their language, food, and values. Interestingly, some elements that were once a source of embarrassment during their youth were now appreciated.

Many participants mentioned the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual. They described their language as "deeply rooted" in their culture (Brown, 2011). One participant said that passing along her heritage language to her future children was important to her (Schönpflug, 2009; Tam, 2015). Participants described language as a means of communication with parents and relatives (Mills, 2001).

A previous theme indicated that food was a distinguishable component of their culture, contributing to a sense of difference from their peers. Participants who felt embarrassed about their cultural foods due to comments about them being "weird" or "odd" expressed a desire to preserve their cuisine. The passing down of cultural recipes was mentioned as a crucial aspect of maintaining their culture.

In this study, many bicultural Canadians mentioned the importance of family as a component of their culture that they wished to maintain. Bicultural Canadians described family-oriented values as respect for elders, closeness, cooperation among family members, and caring for the family. Participants viewed their family as a whole unit. Although participants mentioned their frustration with their parents' strictness and parenting style, that frustration did not reduce their love for their parents. Some participants stated they wanted to give back to their parents by caring for them when they got older.

Moreover, the results of this study narrate a story: bicultural children wrestled with the complexity of their bicultural identity. As a result, they compared themselves to their white peers and questioned why they were different. As they developed their sense of self, they faced conflict with those around them as they negotiated with their bicultural identity. Yet, as they matured into adults, they proudly embraced their identity. Notably, bicultural Canadians leveraged their bicultural identity as a bridge to connect their two worlds, hoping to foster mutual understanding (Hughey & Speer, 2002; Townley et al., 2011).

Study Limitations

The present study has limited generalizability due to the nature of the sample. Participants were drawn from a diverse pool of ethnicities, and as the study focused on shared experiences, it did not address differences between cultural groups. The findings cannot be generalized due to the different cultural contexts present in various groups. Additionally, as most participants identified as female, the bicultural experience in the current study primarily reflected female experiences. If more male participants had been included, the gender-based findings might have varied because prior research has demonstrated that males experience higher levels of bicultural stress than females (Piña-Watson, Dornhecker, & Salinas, 2015; Romero, Carvajal, et al., 2007). Furthermore, since the participants were recruited from a university participant pool, the results may not apply to the general population outside of a university setting.

Additionally, the diverse nature of the sample might have limited the appropriateness of the quantitative measures to assess specific intercultural differences. For example, some participants stated in their short answers that the media does not represent their ethnic group (e.g., Chaldean), which was a barrier to appropriately answering the media portrayal items. Moreover, using open-ended written responses to collect qualitative data limits the ability to request clarification and explore specific responses. Future research should utilize measures and methods more sensitive to these potential limitations.

The timing of data collection during the peak of social justice issues is another potential limitation of this study. The period between June and October 2020 coincided with widespread protests in Minneapolis, Minnesota, following the police killing of George Floyd. These events might have influenced participants' responses, particularly regarding media coverage. Black Canadian participants reported observing negative media coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement, while Asian Canadian participants reported seeing racially biased coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although historically significant, the intense focus on social justice issues during this period may have affected the results of this study.

Conclusion and Implications

The study revealed that as bicultural Canadians age, they might experience a reduction in stress associated with their bicultural identity. Nevertheless, the complete elimination of bicultural stress may not be achievable with age. The identified themes are not similar to developmental stages that the individual must overcome to move on to the next stage (e.g., Erikson, 1980). Instead, the proposition is that bicultural Canadians might encounter the benefits of both cultures (e.g., "the best of both worlds") while still grappling with feelings of differentiation and conflict regarding their bicultural identity, albeit to a lesser extent than in their adolescent years. This struggle may be particularly pronounced when confronted with societal prejudices and discriminatory practices.

The findings from this study underscore the importance of diversity training for teachers and others in school settings. Meeuwisse and colleagues (2010) found that teacher and peer interactions were antecedents of students' sense of belonging. Therefore, teachers should advocate for diversity and inclusion in their classes. Promoting diversity would benefit students and prevent future adverse mental health outcomes and unhealthy behaviors resulting from long-term bicultural stress, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (e.g., Piña-Watson, Dornhecker, & Salinas, 2015).

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Findings from this study related to ethnic first names can open new avenues of research on microaggressions in school and workplace settings. Educators and employers must recognize different microaggressions and their effects on students and employees, including reactions to first names. Further research could investigate how responses to one's name can shape the experiences of ethnic minority students and suggest strategies to support individuals' appreciation of their names as a special part of their identity. Overall, findings from this study can benefit individuals and organizations in multicultural societies such as Canada, the U.S., and beyond.

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Notes on Contributors

Carolyn Tran, M.A., is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Social Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Canada. She is a second-generation Canadian and a first-generation student. Her research examines the experiences of bicultural Canadians with racism and racial microaggressions in the education system.

Kathryn Lafreniere, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Windsor, where she has been employed since 1991. She teaches courses in cultural diversity, community psychology, health psychology, and ethical issues. Her research examines individual and societal influences on health and well-being, with a particular focus on risk-taking behaviors.

Ben C.H. Kuo, Ph.D., conducts studies and publishes in the areas of cross-cultural psychology and multicultural counselling/psychotherapy. His main research focuses on the topics of acculturation, cultural stress and coping, professional help-seeking attitudes and behaviors, and cultural adjustment and mental health issues among immigrants and culturally diverse populations in North America and internationally. Currently, Dr. Kuo teaches and supervises graduate students in clinical psychology programs through a multicultural psychotherapy practicum and a didactic multicultural counselling/psychotherapy course.

Kathryn Edmunds, Ph.D., RN, is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Windsor, Ontario. My teaching and research interests include using a critical theoretical perspective to explore relationships among displacement, gendered migration, structural violence, and health experienced by temporary agricultural workers in Canada using qualitative analysis, and how the concepts of culture, power and cultural safety are utilized in nursing and healthcare.

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