Bicultural Identity and Academic Achievement: The Second-Generation Immigrant Student Experience

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Abstract: By comparing the academic processes of immigrant groups, this review aimed to explore the impact of immigration status and cultural backgrounds on academic achievement. By exploring acculturation, parental expectations, self-efficacy, goal adjustment, motivation, and control beliefs of university students, the constructs best correlated to academic achievement were explored. In investigating first, second, and third-generation immigrant groups, many contrasts were evident amongst these groups. It was found that not only do these groups differ in their academic achievements, but these groups are unique from one another in key areas. This article specifically explores the differences in constructs amongst immigrant groups with an analysis provided to highlight existing results of quantitative comparisons supplementing the literature.

Keywords: Immigration, university, education, cognitions, identity, Canada.

Introduction

Immigration is the movement of people across countries. In 2018 and 2019, migration was the highest worldwide since the second World War as individuals and families settle in locations that show promise of political, social, and economic prosperity (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2020). Canada is a global leader in immigration, as immigrants represent 1 in 5 people in the country with rates steadily rising. Just over three hundred thousand immigrants were granted permanent residency in Canada in the year 2019, marking the highest influx of immigrants into the country since 1913 (2020). Canada maintains these high immigration rates because immigration is perceived by immigrants as enhancing economic prosperity and educational gain through welcoming policies, accommodating social services, and providing quality school infrastructure (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2020).

As first-generation immigrants to Canada settle in their new country of residence, they often start a family and have children who are identified as "second-generation immigrants." These individuals are born in Canada but have at least one parent born outside of the country (Statistics Canada, 2018). As the number of first-generation immigrants is on the rise, comprising about 22% of the total Canadian population, the number of second-generation immigrants in Canada also continues to increase; this demographic accounts for 17.7% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2017). In Ontario specifically, second-generation immigrants comprise approximately 22% of the current population (Statistics Canada, 2018). Third-generation immigrants in Canada comprise the largest demographic of Canadians, making up approximately 60% of the population, and are defined as those who have both parents and sometimes grandparents born in Canada. The changing demographics reflects positive Canadian sociocultural practices such as diversity and inclusion, but also leads to questions regarding group similarities or differences.

Research reveals that second-generation immigrants tend to fare better than their first-generation and third-generation immigrant peers in educational attainment (Statistics Canada, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017). They tend to attain higher GPAs, and account for 40% of post-secondary school graduates as compared to the 24% accounted for by children of Canadian-born parents, who include "third-generation immigrants" (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2018). With the unique circumstances presented by second-generation immigrants, it is important to understand the factors that may contribute to or hinder their academic achievement.

Immigrant groups differ from one another in many ways, one of which is regarding their reporting of ethnocultural origins, which may inform their ethnic ties, values, and attitudes. Specific cultural values may be indicators of the behaviours and attitudes exhibited by members of a specific community. For example, cultures rooted in attaining fiscal and social prestige identify success in education as a requirement to achieve the desired social and financial standing (Picot & Hou, 2011; Tao & Hong, 2013). Research on Canadian educational attainment indicates that second-generation immigrants from China, India, Africa, other parts of Asia, and the Middle East have the highest percentage of university graduates (Abada et al., 2008; Kucera, 2008). In part, this may be attributable to views on education, as Eastern cultural values emphasize the importance of success in schooling (Costigan et al., 2010). When these cultural values are brought to Canadian societies, they may be difficult to maintain or pass along to future generations.

Cultures tend to be characterized based on a continuum of varying degrees of interdependence or independence among groups and individuals (Klassen, 2004). Collectivist cultures tend to view a collaborative society as a more functional one, with emphasis on community or familial duty, collective identity, and group solidarity. In contrast, individualistic cultures focus on individual initiative and consciousness, as well as independence (Klassen, 2004). Canada is commonly categorized as an individualistic society (Rothwell, 2016). An intergenerational acculturation gap may occur as a result of becoming immersed in a new society with alternative values. For example, immigrants to Canada from collectivistic cultures common in South Asian and East Asian might be compelled to reconcile with the values they wish to maintain from their culture of origin, and the values they wish to adopt from their new culture (Renzaho, et. al., 2017; Renzaho, et. al., 2011).

The emergence of a "dichotomous" identity occurs when second-generation immigrants learn to balance multiple attitudes towards areas of emphasis in their lives, thus, creating a complex and distinctive bicultural second-generation immigrant student experience. As second-generation immigrants have the unique opportunity to choose which of their cultures' values they recognize as beneficial, they have the advantage of the "best of both worlds." Positive attributes of their culture of origin tend to carry over in educational settings, providing the differences in academic success found across groups (Valdivia et al., 2016). Understanding Canadian infrastructures and being more fluent in English than first-generation immigrants prepare them to navigate Canadian society (Myers et al., 2020; Valdiviaet al., 2016). Although second-generation immigrants have the ability to choose their values, often, there are disparities between some of the newly adopted values from Canadian culture and the ones found in their culture of origin. Being immersed in the Canadian society leaves some immigrant youth feeling that their culture of origin and Canadian culture are incompatible.

Potential conflicts between Canadian culture and the culture of origin can create constant comparisons between the two cultures (Grant, 2007) because immigrant families may differ in terms of family solidarity, expectations for success, and familial obligations. Youth may become vulnerable to the dilution of their culture and values as they grow up in Canadian society, and for some, this may mean adopting more individualistic values (Merz et al., 2009). Second-generation immigrants represent critical prospects for a family of immigrants; they serve as the fruits of parental labour and sacrifice, they are the face of the summation of child rearing, they reflect the family's customary values, and are the ones who are primed to fulfill familial goals of economic mobility and social prestige to foster a prosperous future (Ajrouch, 2000; Sabatier & Berry, 2008). Therefore, second-generation immigrants face both opportunities and pressures that culminate into factors of their personalities and demonstrative elements in education.

To investigate these complexities further, cognitive variables that may affect academic achievement were explored for the three immigrant groups: first-generation, second-generation, and third-generation immigrants. By using a developmental lens and researching relevant literature, the constructs of acculturation, parental expectations, self-efficacy, goal adjustment, motivation, and control beliefs were individually found to best contribute to academic achievement (Abada et al., 2008; Gifford et al., 2006; Kucera, 2008; Nowicki et al., 2004; Peng & Wright, 1994; Picot & Hou, 2011). The proposed research investigates the potential for the combination of all or specific constructs to create an impact on academic achievement especially amongst differing immigrant groups and was thus explored in this article.

Literature Review

Cognitions, values, and behaviours of individuals are greatly impacted by environmental influences, as theorized in the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In accordance with this model, the developmental influences of an individual are affected by the broader environment of cultural ideologies known as the macrosystem, including cultural norms and laws. In the exosystem, financial difficulties within a family of origin or parental experiences at work that affect the home environment play a role in the development of an individual. The mesosystem is concerned with interconnections between social spheres, such as with parents and teachers or peers. Finally, the microsystem is the most immediate source of influence, including an individual's family, school, religious institutions, and peers (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Using this model as a reference with a top-down approach, constructs impacting a student's development and behaviours can be measured using variables that contribute to academic achievement, taking into account the constructs of acculturation, parental expectations, self-efficacy, goal adjustment, motivation, and control beliefs from a holistic perspective.

Abada et al. (2008) and Kucera (2008) found that the higher rate of educational achievement for second-generation immigrant students may be related to the education levels attained by the parents of the students. In addition, a large number of youth and young adults attaining higher levels of education than their parents are observed among the first and second-generation immigrant population. Variables of family structure, family income, and education levels were determinants of educational attainment among second-generation immigrant students (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2008; Kucera, 2008). Kucera (2008) found contradictory patterns to Abada, Hou, and Ram's (2008) study by controlling for individual differences, which indicated that parental education had no effect on the university attainment of first-generation immigrants; this result may also be extended to apply to second-generation immigrants. Childs and colleagues (2015) added that although parental education may have some impact, second-generation immigrants who did not have parents with high levels of education or income still attended university in higher numbers despite the disadvantages they faced (Childs et al., 2015; Heath, Rothon, & Kilpi, 2008). Second-generation immigrants can attribute their successes to multiple factors including their own attitudes and behaviours which are supported by cultural influences from their home culture and the culture of the "new" country.

Acculturation. As individuals experience prolonged interaction with another culture, gradual cultural and psychological adaptations occur, contributing to the complex process of acculturation (Cheng & Fox, 2008; Fung, 2015). Enculturation measures the extent that individuals maintain an identity with their heritage culture involving intellectual, personal, cultural, and social life, while acculturation measures how much they wish to integrate with the greater society in which they currently live (Cheng & Fox, 2008; Fung, 2015). Length of residence in a country is shown to strengthen assimilation to the new culture while weakening identification with the culture of origin, as seen when comparing second-generation immigrants and newcomers to the same country (Ward, 2004). First and second-generation immigrant students typically must learn how to engage and fit into both of their cultures and adapt to the customs of both cultures, often establishing an "in-between" bicultural identity (Berry, 2005; 2015; Lanphier & Abu-Laban, 1982). The process of acculturation imparts experiences of negotiation, adaptation, mediation, assimilation, and potential conflict interpersonally and intra-personally to varying degrees (Berry, 2005; Lanphier & Abu-Laban, 1982). Acculturation includes individual and group processes of adaptation to cultures. Youth and their families experience variations in the rates and extents to which they acculturate, which may lead to potential for conflicts in value attributed to education or domain that may be difficult to reconcile given the goals of parents and students (Berry, 2005). In order to reconcile internal or external conflicts, the necessary supports are essential for life satisfaction and success within Canada, as well as being able to have strong ties to both one's heritage culture and the mainstream society (Berry & Hou, 2016; Berry et al., 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003).

Multiculturalism is normalized and widely welcomed by Canadian social policies (Sabatier & Berry, 2008), with these policies significantly affecting the outcomes of acculturation. In regard to academics, higher levels of education are linked to stronger identification with the culture of the country of residence (Ward, 2004). The question remains about how acculturation may affect school performance. Research finds that stress due to acculturation does not have an effect on academic performance, although the effects of acculturation as one develops may provide different results (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). However, contrasting studies conducted in Canada suggest that having a more Canadian orientation, or being more acculturated, is more beneficial for schooling (Paterson & Hakim-Larson, 2012). Acculturation occurring via adaptations of ethnic identity, ethnic interactions, and language use are all impacted by social climate, policies, accessibility to resources, and are a determinant of how acculturated one has become (Berry et al., 2006; Cheng & Fox, 2008).

Parental Expectations. In the lives of students, parents play an integral role on many fronts, including influencing post-secondary school attendance, grades, perseverance, and goal setting (Bronstein, Ginsburg & Herrera, 2005). In most cases, parents provide direction, guidance, and act as role models for their offspring. Parental aspirations are important predictors of academic achievement as they have been positively related to a child's educational attainment. The aspirations parents hold help to communicate the expectations and standards for their children to follow (Spera et al., 2008). It is important to recognize that parental expectations for their children's education depict realistic prospects for children reflective of the child's education and abilities (Dimitrova et al., 2018; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). This trend of higher expectations resulting in higher achievement also links to other constructs including goal adjustment and motivation (Peng & Wright, 1994; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) identify connections between these processes across racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, there is further evidence indicating achievement varies across immigration statuses (Pivovarova & Powers, 2019; Somerville & Robinson, 2016). Somerville and Robinson (2016) note the intergenerational influences

first and second-generation immigrant parents instill on their children due to their expectations, with children tending to adopt similar values of educational attainment, academic achievement, and motivation as their parents.

"Family mobilization theory" highlights the influences parents convey to their children. This theory proposes that parents tend to immigrate to locations with more opportunities, driven by the expectations of success in their children (Childs et al., 2015; Heath et al., 2008). A common acknowledgement among immigrant parents is that they "uprooted" themselves for their children, demonstrating a sense of sacrifice by parents for their children's futures (Childs et al., 2015; Heath et al., 2008; Somerville & Robinson, 2016). Immigrant parents commonly retain the values of their cultural backgrounds, dwelling on the beliefs that academic achievement will lead to future financial stability, success, and social status. Parents tend to believe that children will be guaranteed the most success if the child is studying or employed in a field deemed by them to be more "prestigious," such as in medicine, science, or mathematics (Picot & Hou, 2011; Somerville & Robinson, 2016). This ideology may take precedence in the educational and career choices that offspring make. Pursuing education in these desired fields will enhance the personal prestige of youth as well as reinforcing the values of education, motivation, academic success, and goals learned from their parents (Picot & Hou, 2011, Somerville & Robinson, 2016).

Self-Efficacy. The construct of self-efficacy describes one's confidence or belief in their expression of behaviours that will lead to a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). This definition is expanded upon in most recent research in different domains, as academic self-efficacy refers to students believing that their capabilities and behaviours will lead to desired academic success (Schunk, 1991). Self-efficacy is evident in learning processes, as it is shown to have a direct positive relationship with success in academic performance, especially amongst post-secondary students (Lee et al., 2014; Multon et al., 1991; Zimmerman, 2000). This construct can influence a student's effort on educational tasks by mediating learning processes, increasing persistence, and enhancing confidence in one's academic abilities (Solberg et al., 1993; Zimmerman, 2000). Although self-efficacy has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of academic success (Hattie, 2009, as cited in Arnold, 2011), differences in one's perceived self-efficacy are apparent as a function of immigration statuses (Solberg et al., 1993). Studies have shown that academic self-efficacy is moderately heightened in second-generation immigrant students as opposed to first-generation immigrant students (Majer, 2009; Vuong et al., 2010; Wang, & Castañeda-Sound, 2008). Generational immigration status also interacts with race and ethnicity to further influence academic self-efficacy (Bondy, Peguero, & Johnson, 2017). Interestingly, studies indicate that a correlation is present with increased assimilation and acculturation into Canadian society, an immigrant youth's academic self-efficacy will increase (Bondy et al., 2017).

Despite some evidence, many contradictions remain regarding levels of self-efficacy amongst individuals of different ethnicities or backgrounds. Collectivist ideologies and optimism serve as prevalent determinants of lower self-efficacy scores among youth from collectivist cultures compared to third-generation immigrant students integrated into individualistic cultures (Bondy et al., 2017; Kao, 1999; Klassen, 2004). Collectivistic ideals are thought to be related to lower levels of self-efficacy. However, lower reported self-esteem does not interfere with levels of achievement in this group (Bondy et al., 2017; Jaret & Reitzes, 2009; Klassen, 2004). The collectivistic views claim to be "realistic" as opposed to optimistic (Klassen, 2004), which interestingly contrasts with the heightened optimism usually shown by immigrant parents in their children's prospects (Kao & Tienda, 1994; Raleigh & Kao, 2010).

Goal Adjustment. As people create goals to pursue for themselves, goal adjustment theory helps explain how one may adapt in the event of not being able to achieve the goal they have set by using strategies of adjustment (Mens et al., 2015; Wrosch et al., 2003). Goal adjustment includes relinquishing an unattainable goal and committing to a new goal, which drives an individual to disconnect from what is unachievable and focus on what may be more realistically attainable. In expending effort to another endeavor, one uses the strategy of reengagement to identify, commit, and put effort towards an alternative goal that is more achievable (Mens et al., 2015). Although the applicability of goal adjustment for academic goals is still not thoroughly researched, assumptions can be made about how the capacity for goal engagement or reengagement may be applied to students' performance in higher education. Direct feedback provided by schools can give rise to perceived goal unattainability, affecting student's future goals and aspects of self. Evidence suggests that disengagement from an unattainable goal may have positive effects on one's self-mastery but must be combined with reengagement with another goal to have a positive effect on wellbeing (Boudrenghien et al., 2012; Wrosch et al., 2003). It is important to reallocate limited resources such as time and effort to goals that are more attainable, as students must use strategic goal setting, or goal reengagement to aid in the pursuit

and completion of their future goals, as well as their wellbeing (Boudrenghie et al., 2012; Ntoumanis & Sedikides, 2018).

One may relinquish their goals as per their attitudes and perspectives about what the goal may mean to them and what it may bring them, for example, life satisfaction and social attributions (Wrosch et al., 2003). Many immigrants that move to Canada are highly skilled and have high levels of education (Statistics Canada, 2017), although some foreign degrees and licensures do not have equivalency to Canadian education standards (Government of Canada, 2020). Skilled immigrants tend to experience under-employment, which include job mismatch or obtaining high status occupations at slow rates, earning below their potential or having jobs not fully utilizing their skills (Fong & Jiao, 2013; Frank, 2013; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012). In addition to the difficulties in economic integration, immigrants feel frustration and disappointment, or "goal striving stress" when their initial aspirations are not met as they must shift their perspectives of goal attainment in their job sectors (Fong & Jiao, 2013; Frank & Hou, 2016). Considering principles of the goal adjustment theory, immigrants could reallocate their focus of goal importance in the face of being over-qualified for their employment in Canada. To adjust their current realities, they reassess their goals as they become accustomed to their situations, placing less importance on unattainable goals (Frank & Hou, 2016; Mens et al., 2015). For example, attaining the significant goal of immigrating holds precedence in terms of their perceptions of satisfactory wellbeing (Frank et al., 2016), bringing to light the positive effects of goal adjustment. Limited research is available on the utility of goal adjustment theory in understanding immigrant success across immigration statuses (Frank & Hou, 2017).

Motivation. Motivation is related to academic achievement and therefore to an individual's path to success. Motivation may have a strong influence on the success a student can have in education (Arnold, 2011; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2018). Motivation takes on a variety of forms, clarified through individual incentive and related behaviours. Motivation can be classified as extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is described as being driven by external rewards or a means to an end outside the task at hand. Intrinsic motivation is defined as personal satisfaction, interest in learning, and self-determined behaviour for the purpose of individual benefit. A third variation known as amotivation is explained to be the lack of extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, as one will believe that their behaviours are connected to external factors while attributing a lack of competence and value to activities and outcomes (Cokley et al., 2001; Deci et al., 1991; Vallerand et al., 1992). In post-secondary institutions, intrinsic motivation is more commonly recognized amongst those with high academic achievement, as they tend to demonstrate higher GPAs due to their high engagement with learning materials (Cokley et al., 2001; Deci et al., 1991; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2018). It is also noted that academic success may be achieved through intrinsic motivation regulated by extrinsic motivational factors (Cokley, 2001; Deci, 1991) differentiated by cultures with dominant societal values on academic success (Cokley, 2001; Dekker & Fischer, 2008).

The construct of motivation varies across cultures, which may account for inconsistencies across research studies (Dekker & Fischer, 2008). A pattern identified amongst immigrants of certain cultures is that higher levels of academic achievement are found compared to their non-immigrant counterparts, as well as higher levels of intrinsic motivation; this would mean that intrinsic motivation is a positive predictor of academic achievement as shown amongst these populations (Areepattamannil & Freeman, 2008; Areepattamannil et al., 2011). Many factors influence the academic achievement styles found in immigrants, such as identity or acculturation, attitudes and behaviours, cultural values, or context (Areepattamannil et al., 2011; Dekker & Fischer, 2008; Isiksal, 2010). Intrinsic motivation could be driven by the attitudes and cultural values held by students from collectivistic backgrounds. These values may include being a role model to younger siblings or having shared goals such as achieving good grades that are supported in social contexts, which also further complicates the definition of motivation cross-culturally (Isiksal, 2010; Nishimura & Sakurai, 2017; Turner et al., 2009). It seems that despite conflicting factors and differing sources of motivation, most research argues for the need for intrinsic motivation regulated by extrinsic motivation to create the most efficient value system for achieving academic success in Canadian post-secondary institutions (Areepattamannil & Freeman, 2008; Freeman & Klinger, 2011; Isiksal, 2010).

Control Beliefs. Individuals' beliefs in their ability to control outcomes are referred to as a locus of control, or as control beliefs (Rotter, 1966). Individuals attribute the responsibility for an outcome on their abilities, or on factors surrounding them (Rotter, 1966). This theory is also applicable in an academic setting, as there are many studies pointing to evidence of positive correlations between academic achievement and control beliefs, notably that students with higher levels of internal control beliefs have higher rates of academic success and higher GPAs (Gifford et al.,

2006; Nowicki et al., 2004). Students with a high internal locus of control feel that they achieve academic outcomes based on their educational efforts, whereas those with external control beliefs attribute their academic outcomes to external sources such as their professors, their environment, etc., and are, therefore not responsible for the consequences (Crandall, et al., 1965; Rotter, 1975).

It is important to emphasize that in some cases, the value of a task at hand may be subjective. Thus, if an individual with a high internal locus of control does not see value in a positive outcome, one may not engage in the necessary efforts to achieve that result (Rotter, 1975). Effort is highlighted as one key principle to success in the value system held by minority students, as low achievement is attributed to a lack of effort. Both internal and external loci can explain this belief. Internal control beliefs take precedence in that individual efforts will lead to achievement, despite the presence of external factors that may work against the learner (Li, 2003; Yan & Gaier, 1994). The role of locus of control in academic achievement supports the comparison of external versus internal beliefs as a factor in student success.

Summary

By exploring specific constructs related to academic achievement, better insight can be provided into the determinants and cognitive processes required to achieve academic success for immigrant groups. Parental expectations, goal adjustment, self-efficacy, control beliefs, motivation, and acculturation may be further investigated in order to attempt to resolve the questions unanswered by current literature. In a proposed study, recruiting university students to take questionnaires to score their aptitude for the selected constructs and compare them by immigrant group and assess their correlation to academic achievement may help address the gaps in literature.

Second-generation immigrants face unique circumstances that factor into their academic performance, as noted by relevant literature. Preliminary research has already identified some differentiation in constructs amongst immigrant groups (Table 1) (Haddad, 2021) but still requires more thorough investigation. There is still significant research to be done to explain the factors of their achievement more accurately, although it is unrealistic to expect upward mobility from an entire group. By exploring the gaps in literature, better methods of teaching, learning resources, and awareness of differing needs can be made more apparent. Differences based on immigration status and culture amongst students in post-secondary education should be further investigated based on factors relating to educational attainment and success across different groups of immigrants.

Table 1

Between subject comparisons for immigrant groups

	First-generation Immigrants	Second-generation Immigrants	Third-generation Immigrants	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	F Value and Sig
Enculturation	49.05a (11.00)	50.85a (12.25)	60.26b (6.52)	12.92**
Acculturation	46.44a (8.01)	51.29b (5.93)	56.92c (3.12)	29.15**
Efficacy	27.43 (5.40)	26.96 (4.69)	26.90 (4.02)	.160
Parental Expectations	34.83a (10.91)	32.07a (8.35)	26.46b (7.39)	9.67**
Amotivation	8.53	8.04	6.36	2.10

	(6.01)	(4.75)	(4.31)	
Extrinsic Motivation	67.47 (13.86)	68.77 (9.29)	67.40 (8.25)	.337
Intrinsic Motivation	59.41 (13.55)	53.81 (13.34)	55.03 (13.56)	2.21
Disengagement	11.88 (1.62)	11.90 (1.97)	11.63 (1.78)	.327
Reengagement	23.31 (3.70)	22.40 (3.28)	22.07 (3.09)	1.51

** $p < .001$

Note(s). These results were retrieved by a study by Haddad (2021) indicating that some of the constructs discussed from literature demonstrated differences amongst immigrant groups.

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