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Mapping cultural identity and cultural integration among two generations of immigrants in Singapore - Indian and Chinese

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ABSTRACT

Singapore is a highly cosmopolitan country that hosts people from various nationalities. Despite an environment presumed to be very cohesive and with different ethnic groups co-existing together, the level of cultural accommodation and integration among these groups needs to be studied. This research sought to find an explanation for such differences and what factors caused them. A mixed methods study was conducted wherein 86 respondents were surveyed on cultural integration and perceived cultural distance, while eight respondents were interviewed. The interview was conducted with four first-generation and four second-generation immigrants of both Indian and Chinese ethnicity. From the findings, we could conclude that generational status had no effect on perceived cultural distance or multicultural identity integration; however, ethnic background influenced how immigrants across generations perceived their cultural distance. No such findings were found for multicultural identity integration. Moreover, it was reported that individuals who feel a greater distance from the mainstream culture will make more significant efforts to mitigate that distance through integration. Qualitative findings reveal that Indian immigrants experience greater lengths of subtle racism around Singapore, while Chinese immigrants deal with troubles of adapting to the way of life in Singapore. All second-generation respondents expressed stereotypical behavior positively and negatively across both groups. These findings underscore the significant role of ethnic background in shaping the acculturation process of Indian and Chinese immigrants within Singapore's multicultural landscape.

Keywords: cultural identity, cultural integration, Singapore, immigration, Indian, Chinese, acculturation