

Original Article

# Mapping Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration Among Two Generations of Immigrants in Singapore - Indian and Chinese

Atiksh Sinha

Singapore American School, Singapore, Singapore.

Corresponding Author : [atiksh.sinha123@gmail.com](mailto:atiksh.sinha123@gmail.com)

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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 coexisting, cultural Integration varies among groups. This research sought to understand these differences and their underlying causes. A mixed methods study was conducted wherein 86 respondents were surveyed on cultural Integration and perceived cultural distance. In comparison, eight Indian and Chinese respondents were interviewed-four first-generation and four second-generation. Findings revealed that generational status did not affect 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 the 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.

## 1. Introduction

The study of migration, cultural identity, and cross-cultural accommodations has expanded significantly as the world has become increasingly interconnected. Singapore is at the forefront of cultural diversification. From the 20th to the 21st century, Singapore has had an open immigration policy that has encouraged individuals to come to Singapore (Nowrasteh, 2018). This was part of Singapore's goal to develop its population. In the 1990s, the Singaporean population was barely three million, growing to six million in just 3 decades ((DOS) SingStat Table Builder – Indicators On Population, n.d.). As a result, Singapore evolved into a multicultural hub of diverse religions and cultures. As one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, Singapore provides a unique setting where diverse cultures coexist and interact. This is a fertile ground for examining how different ethnicities and cultures interact. Singapore's demographic is one of the most varied in the world, and acculturation occurs daily. Acculturation is the process by which individuals or groups from one culture adapt or adjust to another culture's practices, values, customs, and behaviors, typically due to prolonged contact or interaction between cultures

(Administrator, 2016). The movement of people across borders is not just a geographical change; it is one of identity, assimilation, and adaptation. Many immigrants face challenges in balancing the preservation of their cultural heritage with assimilation into the dominant culture in their new demographic. This is particularly true in Singapore. Indians and Chinese are the dominant ethnic groups in Singapore, both residents and immigrants. They also play heavy roles in the nation's social and economic status. First, it is essential to understand the historical background of both Indian and Chinese ethnic groups in Singapore. Both cultures have long-standing ties to Singapore, dating back to the British occupation. Chinese immigrants first arrived in Singapore in the 19th century to pursue economic opportunities in trade and agriculture while escaping the ill-treatment they faced in their home country (Ee, 1961). Soon, the Chinese community became the largest ethnic group in Singapore, significantly contributing to the development of Singapore's port and trade. Despite changes in geography, this wave of immigration encountered minimal issues with assimilation and cultural adaptation (Ken, 1980). The first wave of immigrants brought strong traditional customs to



Singapore and maintained them despite their geographical displacement. Early Chinese immigrants to Singapore faced few challenges with assimilation because they were motivated by economic opportunities and were flexible in adapting to local customs (Ee, 1961). Many adopted local practices, such as wearing Malay clothing, speaking Malay, and enjoying local cuisine. Some even intermarried with local Malays, giving rise to the Peranakan culture, which blended Chinese and Malay traditions. Their cooperation with British colonial authorities also aided their Integration, as many learned English, adopted Western education and adjusted to British business practices. Despite these adaptations, they maintained their Chinese customs, dialects, and religious practices, balancing adaptation and cultural preservation (Freedman, 1960).

Although much smaller in scale than Chinese migration, Indian migration to Singapore followed a similar trajectory during the colonial period. The British colonial administration brought Indian immigrants to Singapore as traders, clerks, and labourers. Like their Chinese counterparts, Indian immigrants also formed close-knit communities deeply rooted in their culture and religion. Some examples are Sikh gurdwaras, temples, and mosques for Muslim Indians. All these cultural and religious preservation methods were pivotal in maintaining cultural identity amidst the pressures of assimilation (Indian Migration Into Malaya and Singapore During the British Period, n.d.). While the upbringing of both ethnicities in Singapore is similar, they have undergone distinct challenges that have shaped their identities. Despite their long history in Singapore, neither culture has been explicitly integrated. Their paths to Integration and cross-cultural accommodation have diverged due to differences in socioeconomic status and social stigmas.

This research employs two key theoretical constructs: Perceived Cultural Distance and Integration. This research paper aims to understand perceived cultural distance and multicultural Integration across generations of Indian and Chinese immigrants into Singapore. But what does it mean as perceived cultural distance? At its core, it is a simple understanding of the level of cultural distance between the immigrant's own culture and the culture of their host country. Multicultural Integration employs similar ideologies but instead considers how accepting immigrants are to the mainstream culture and how adaptive they are. However, it is impossible to determine an individual's Perceived Cultural Distance and Multicultural Integration without understanding someone's cultural identity and how it varies. Cultural identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular community or group, generally shaped by language, traditions, religion, ethnicity, and social class. Cultural identity is also how people view themselves (Gupta & Bhugra, 2009). Cultural identity is a dynamic and ever-changing concept in the context of immigrants. Immigrants

often face the challenge of adapting to new cultural norms while preserving their heritage. It is also important to realize how Cross-cultural accommodation plays a role in this. This concept plays a significant role in Multicultural Integration, as it analyzes the conscious efforts made by both sides and the equilibrium that forms as a result. Cross-cultural accommodations refer to the process by which individuals adapt and assimilate to the cultural norms of the host society. This construct extends past assimilations and involves the reciprocal nature of cultural exchange. Rather than viewing Integration as a one-sided effort, cross-cultural accommodation involves mutual respect and involvement from both cultures. Looking into the lives of immigrants who have moved to Singapore recently and their experience with cultural shifts. In the modern day, new forms of discrimination and racism against certain races are shown through xenophobia online and in person.

Xenophobia is the dislike or prejudice against people from other countries. The most visible forms of xenophobia in Singapore are typically in online spaces of chatrooms, blogs, and social media feeds. The sentiments expressed by those posting on these websites make immigrants feel unwanted and affect their ability to integrate with social groups. An Indian immigrant interviewed by academics, who moved to Singapore 5 years ago, says, "If you read any Facebook posts of Channel News Asia (CNA) or the Straits Times, and if you see the comment section, there will be lots of bad comments on Indians particularly" (Kathiravelu, 2022). However, xenophobia also extends past the online world and cannot be avoided by new immigrants as they search for a better quality of life. The government of Singapore is very liberal when it comes to providing housing for its residents; there are specific regulations for the number of individuals of an ethnic group that can live in Housing Development Boards (Kathiravelu, 2022).

Immigrants who are ineligible for government housing are forced to find houses in the rental market, where they experience new waves of xenophobia informally. Kathiravelu interviewed with an Indian male respondent who moved to Singapore 4 years ago; he said, "Here are many Housing & Development Board (HDB) owners who specifically say that they do not prefer Indians". Locals expanded stereotypes of smelly and dirty Indians from the working-class, low-wage South Asian migrants to the middle class. Not all experiences of Indian immigrants in Singapore have been negative, though. In an interview conducted by Silicon Republic, one Indian interviewee who recently moved to Singapore from Bangalore described his experience as very inviting. He says he "never had any major challenges when I relocated" and is "a melting pot of cultures and races". Calling the lifestyle easy to get used to and the prevalent multiculturalism, he had a very smooth transition from Bangalore to Singapore. Each experience can vary based on multiple factors, such as the purpose of

immigration, religion, and race. Nonetheless, when migrating to a new country, there will also be positives and negatives no matter what. The significance of this research is very direct and can be applied in numerous scenarios. First, it adds to the growing literature on migration in Southeast Asia. It provides nuanced, statistics-backed insights into how different groups navigate the complexities of cultural identity and cross-cultural accommodations. Second, by examining two distinct groups of immigrants, this study offers a comparative perspective and sheds light on how both groups approach identity and accommodation. Lastly, this paper could serve as a valuable template for new Singapore immigrants. This could also be an example of international policymakers grappling with Integration and cross-cultural accommodation challenges.

The research gap this paper addresses is the intersection of cultural Integration and the cultural identity of Indians and Chinese immigrants. A significant amount of the online literature broadly explores this topic, discussing the social policies implemented by Singapore and comparing them to those in other parts of the world (Mathews & Hong, 2014). This paper focuses on how both ethnicities adapt to immigration in Singapore and the cultural experiences of individuals. This research aims to map the perceived cultural distance and cultural integration identity of Indian and Chinese immigrants in Singapore, focusing on the differences between first—and second-generation immigrants. By examining these communities' historical, theoretical, and social contexts, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of cultural identity in shaping the immigrant experience in a globalized world. This paper also aims to map the evolution of cultural Integration over time and across generations by examining how first-generation immigrants and their second-generation descendants negotiate their cultural identities.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Aim

This paper aims to explore and analyze the perceived cultural distance and experiences of integrating multicultural identity across two generations of Indian and Chinese immigrants in Singapore, highlighting the interplay between heritage and adaptation in a multicultural context.

### 2.2. Objectives

- To compare and contrast the acculturation of Indian and Chinese immigrants
- Understand the cultural differences between first- and second-generation Indian and Chinese immigrants.
- To explore / evaluate how groups navigate the complexities of cultural identity and cross-cultural accommodations.
- To understand how different genders have different experiences while immigrating

### 2.3. Hypothesis

- H1 = There is a significant difference between immigrant type (first-generation and second-generation) on Perceived Cultural Distance.
- H2 = There will be a significant difference between ethnicity (Indian and Chinese) in perceived cultural distance.
- H3 = There is a significant difference between the type of immigrant (first-generation and second-generation) in multicultural identity integration.
- H4 = There is a significant difference between ethnicity (Indian and Chinese) in Multicultural Identity Integration.
- H5 = There is a correlation between Perceived Cultural Distance and Multicultural Identity Integration.
- H6 = Multicultural Identity Integration is a significant predictor for Perceived Cultural Distance.
- H7 = Perceived Cultural Distance is a significant predictor for Multicultural Identity Integration.

### 2.4. Sample and Sampling Technique

The targeted sample size for the present research is 53 Indian immigrants and 33 Chinese immigrants, comprising 33 first-generation immigrants and 20 second-generation immigrants. Comparatively, there were 20 first-generation Chinese immigrants and 13 second-generation immigrants. Data is collected through purposive sampling techniques and interviews.

### 2.5. Instrumentation

1. Perceived Cultural Distance (Wang, 2009): This scale looks to understand the cultural distances immigrants face when immigrating to new countries. They do this by asking about family structures, communication styles, values of families, and climate. Responders are asked to respond to the 16 items on the questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = no difference; 2 = slight difference; 3 = moderate difference; 4 = significant difference; 5 = extreme difference.
2. Multicultural identity integration scale (Yampolsky et al., 2015): The present questionnaire examines cultural identity and context. In the study, 19 items were taken from the questionnaire to study adaptive categorization and acceptance of culture. The items on the questionnaire are on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 = not at all and 7 = exactly.

### 2.6. Data Collection Procedure & Ethical Considerations

All data was collected through Google Forms. To safeguard participants' safety and confidentiality, all participants have consented to anonymous and confidential data collection. All participants will be provided with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Qualitative data was collected through online and in-person interviews. All participants provided verbal consent to record and use their responses for data collection in this research paper.

### 3. Results

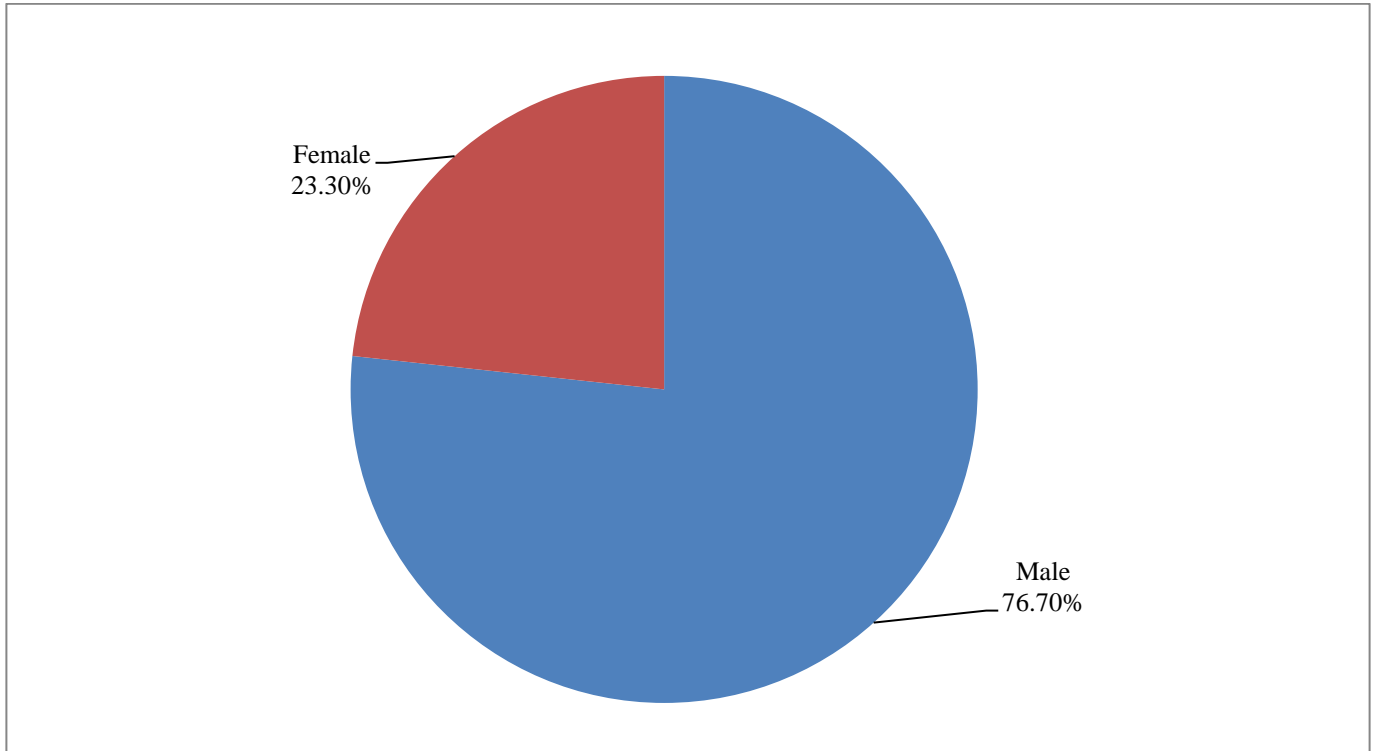


Fig. 1 Shows the number of male and female respondents (N=86)

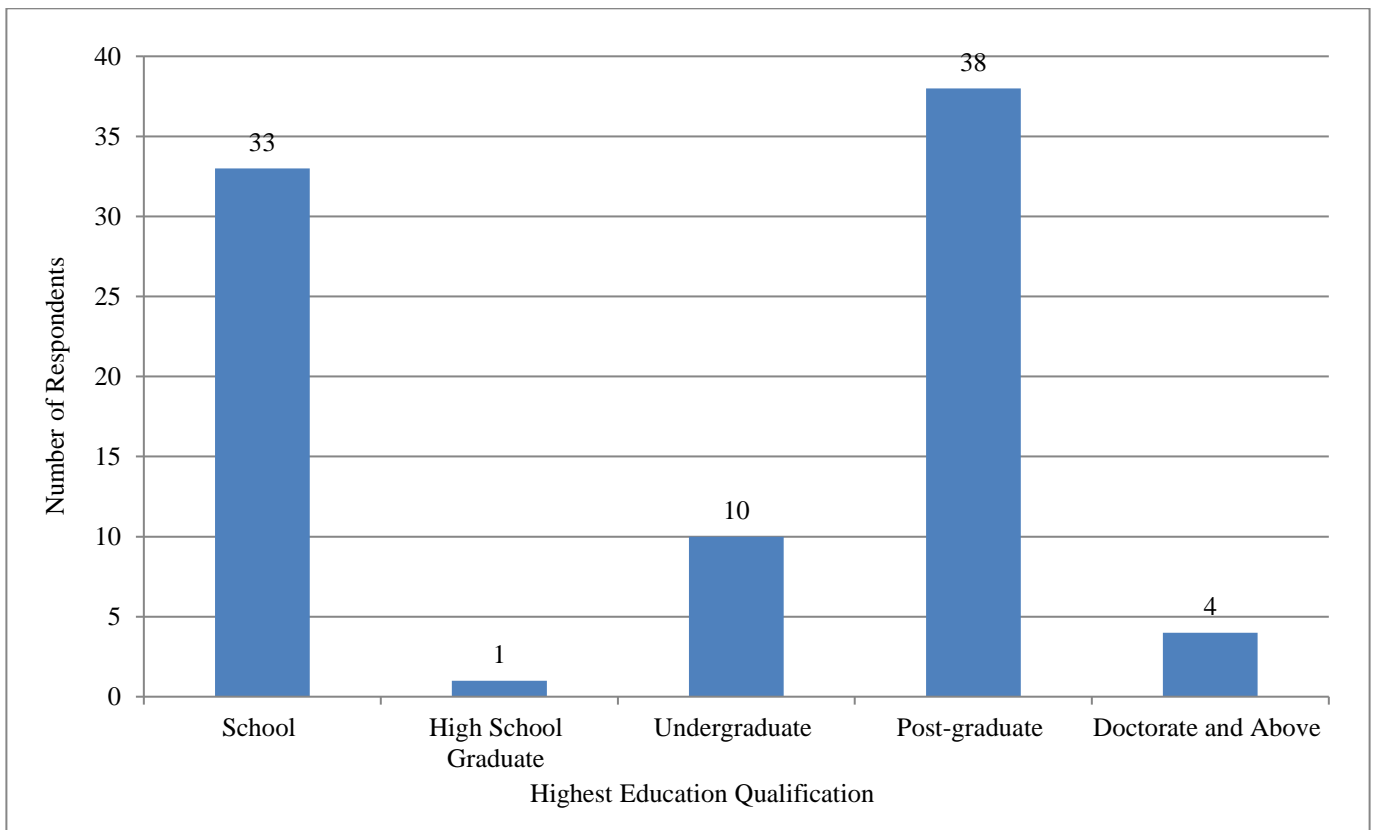


Fig. 2 Shows the highest level of education qualification attained by the respondents (N=86)

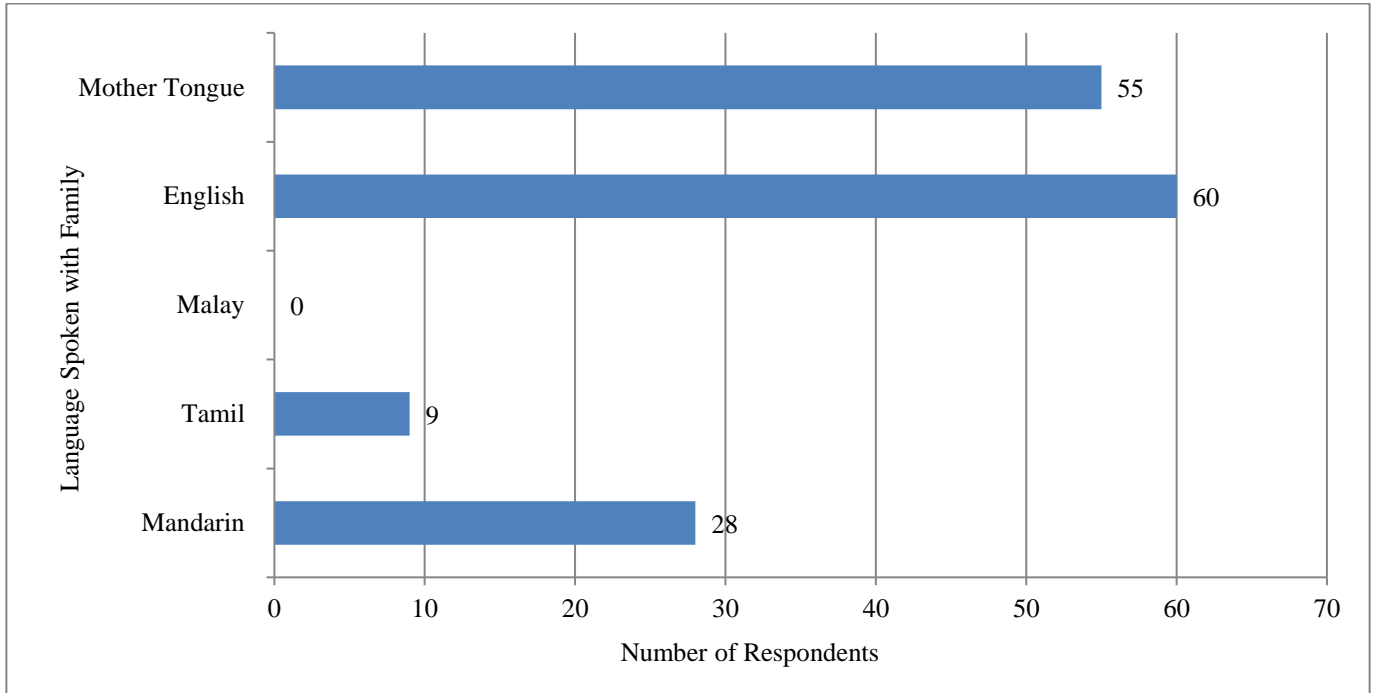


Fig. 3 Shows the languages spoken with family by the respondents (N=86)

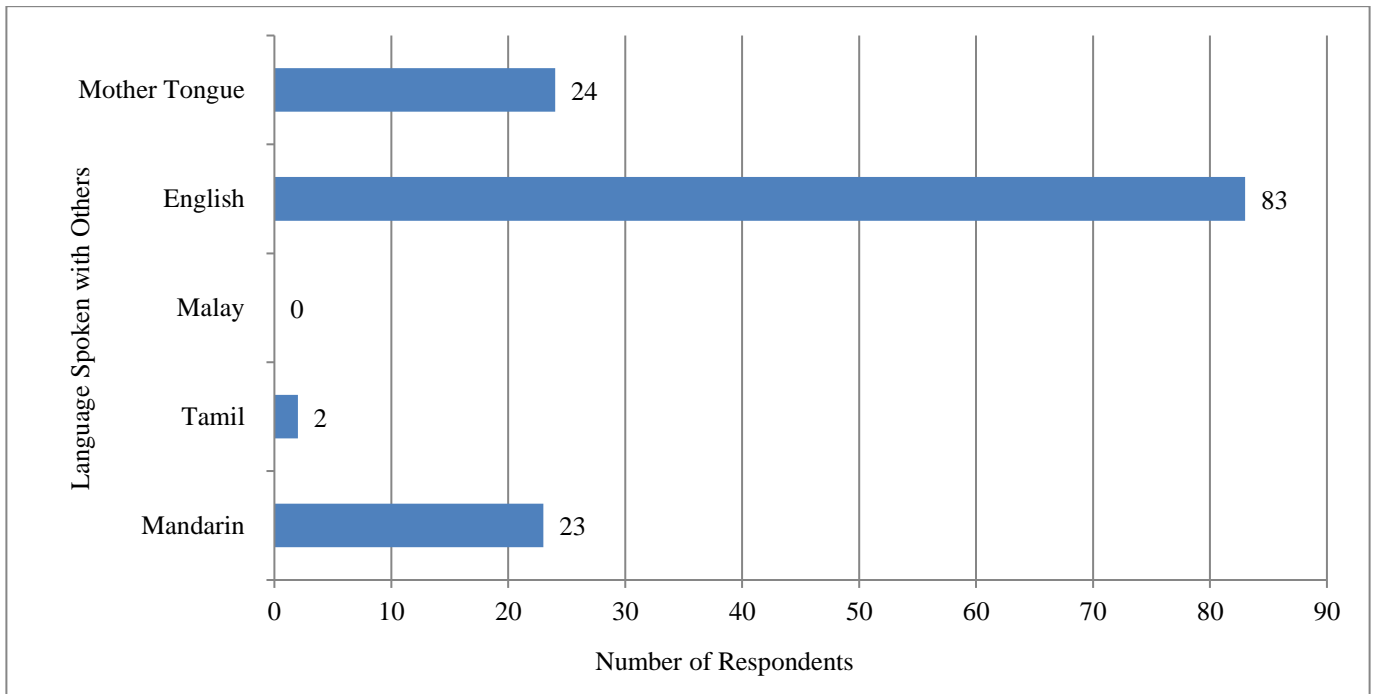


Fig. 4 Shows the languages spoken with others by the respondents (N=86)

Table 1. Shows the t-test values for immigrant type and perceived cultural distance

		n	M	S.D	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Perceived Cultural Distance	Second-Generation Immigrant	35	50.2	5.7	-1.06	84	.291	0.23
	First-Generation Immigrant	51	52.06	9.2				

**Table 2. Shows the t-test values for ethnicity and perceived cultural distance**

		<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Cohen's d</b>
<b>Perceived Cultural Distance</b>	<b>Indian</b>	53	53.72	8	3.83	84	<.001	0.85
	<b>Chinese</b>	33	47.42	6.31				

**Table 3. Shows the t-test values for immigrant type and MULTHS**

		<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Cohen's d</b>
<b>MULTHS Score</b>	<b>Second-Generation Immigrant</b>	35	27.51	7.13	-1.48	84	.142	0.33
	<b>First-Generation Immigrant</b>	51	30.45	10.1				

\*MULTHS = The Multicultural Identity Integration Scale

**Table 4. Shows the t-test values for ethnicity and MULTHS**

		<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Cohen's d</b>
<b>MULTHS Score</b>	<b>Indian</b>	53	30.62	9.58	1.79	84	.077	0.4
	<b>Chinese</b>	33	27.06	7.85				

According to Table 1, the findings reveal that there is no significant difference between the means of second-generation immigrants ( $M = 50.2$ ,  $S.D. = 5.7$ ) and first-generation immigrants ( $M = 52.06$ ,  $S.D. = 9.2$ ) on perceived cultural distance,  $t = -1.06$ ,  $p = 0.291$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). The Cohen's D value of 0.23 indicates a small effect size. Hence, hypothesis 1, which states that there will be a significant difference between immigrant types on Perceived Cultural Distance, was thus rejected. In Table 2, the results reveal that there is a significant difference between the means of Indian ( $M = 53.72$ ,  $S.D. = 8$ ) and Chinese immigrants ( $M = 47.42$ ,  $S.D. = 6.31$ ) on perceived cultural distance,  $t = 3.83$ ,  $p = <0.001$ . The Cohen's D value of 0.85 indicates a large effect size. Hence, hypothesis 2, which states there will be a significant difference between ethnicity on Perceived Cultural Distance, will be accepted. According to Table 3,

the findings reveal that there is no significant difference between the means of second-generation ( $M = 27.51$ ,  $S.D. = 7.13$ ) and first-generation immigrants ( $M = 30.45$ ,  $S.D. = 10.1$ ) on the Identity Integration Scale,  $t = -1.48$ ,  $p = 0.142$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Cohen's D value of 0.33 indicates a medium effect size. Hence, hypothesis 3, which states there will be a significant difference between immigrant types on Multicultural Identity Integration, was thus rejected. According to Table 4, the findings reveal no significant difference between the means of Indian ( $M = 30.62$ ,  $S.D. = 9.58$ ) and Chinese ( $M = 27.06$ ,  $S.D. = 7.85$ ) immigrants on the Identity Integration Scale,  $t = 1.79$ ,  $p = 0.077$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Cohen's D value of 0.4 indicates a medium effect size. Hence, hypothesis 4, which states that there will be a significant difference in ethnicity on the Multicultural Identity Integration scale, will thus be rejected.

**Table 5. Presents the correlation between perceived cultural distance and MULTHS**

	<b>r</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Perceived Cultural Distance and MULTHS</b>	0.5	<.001

**Table 6. Shows the simple linear regression analysis between perceived cultural distance and MULTHS**

<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R2</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	38.51		2.55	15.12	<.001	27.65	0.5	0.25
<b>MULTHS</b>	0.44	0.5	0.08	5.26	<.001			

**Table 7. Shows the simple linear regression analysis between perceived cultural distance and MULTHS**

<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R2</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	0.21		5.59	0.04	.97	27.65	0.5	0.25
<b>Perceived Cultural Distance</b>	0.57	0.5	0.11	5.26	<.001			

According to Table 5, the findings reveal a significant, moderate positive correlation between Perceived Cultural Distance and MULTHS,  $r = 0.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Hence, hypothesis 5, which states there will be a correlation between Multicultural Identity Integration and Perceived Cultural Distance, will be accepted. Table 6 presents the results of the simple linear regression analysis between the perceived cultural distance dependent variable and the independent variable of MULTHS. The model shows that the predictor

variable accounts for 25% of the variance in Perceived Cultural Distance ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ). The MULTHS variable is a significant predictor of Perceived Cultural Distance ( $p < 0.001$ ). The unstandardized regression coefficient ( $B = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that for each unit increase in the independent variable, there is a 0.44-unit increase in the dependent variable, other factors being held constant. The standardized regression coefficient indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables ( $Beta = 0.5$ ).

Hence, hypothesis 6, which states that Multicultural Identity Integration is a significant predictor of Perceived Cultural Distance, will be accepted. According to Table 7, the results of the Simple Linear Regression analysis between the dependent variable of MULTIIS and the independent variable of Perceived Cultural Distance. The model shows that the predictor variable accounts for 25% of the variance in Perceived Cultural Distance ( $R^2 = 0.25$ ). The Perceived Cultural Distance significantly predicts MULTIIS ( $p <$

0.001). The unstandardized regression coefficient ( $B = 0.57$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that for each unit increase in the independent variable, there will be a 0.57-unit increase in the dependent variable, other factors being held constant. The standardized regression coefficient indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables ( $Beta = 0.5$ ). Hence, hypothesis 7, which states that Perceived Cultural Distance is a significant predictor for Multicultural Identity Integration, will be accepted.

**Table 8. Shows the theme of struggles faced in moving to Singapore, as well as codes and descriptions**

Themes	Codes	Description
<b>Struggles faced in moving to Singapore</b>	Culture	Singapore is a multinational location with many religions and cultures intermingling.
	Weather	The extremely hot, humid, and tropical climate of Singapore
	Language	Difficulty in adapting to the language of Singapore and the way it is spoken
	Open-minded/Understanding	Being open to different perspectives from people belonging to various walks of life
<b>Evolution in Cultural Identity</b>	Cultural mixing	Singapore serves as a hub of multiple cultures.
	Celebrations	Change in the trend of celebrating festivals, primarily Indian.
<b>Maintaining Cultural Traditions</b>	Celebrate Native Holidays	Holidays such as Holi, Diwali, Chinese New Year
	Family Traditions	Traditions of eating meals together as a family and celebrating festivals together
<b>Influence on children</b>	Language	Heavy emphasis on teaching their children their native language
	Festivals	Teaching about different festivals and the reasons for celebrating them
	Values	Imprint cultural and religious values to carry on to the next generation
	Maintaining balance in cultures	To ensure children have the opportunity to explore new cultures while also having sufficient information regarding their own
<b>Connection with parents' homeland</b>	Culture	Continuing the cultural traditions they had in their homeland. Staying connected to people of their culture
	Family	Staying closely connected with Family and relatives in their homeland
	Religious celebrations	Celebrating all major religious and cultural celebrations kept respondents connected to their parent's homeland.
	Eating traditional food	Respondents prefer to eat traditional food to remind them of their parent's homeland.
<b>Language as a connection</b>	Forced to learn the native language	Parents teach their children to learn their native language by having them read, write, and speak only when communicating with them and their relatives.
	Talking with Family in their native language	Communicating with grandparents and siblings in their native language to ensure fluency in their native language
	Language classes	Being enrolled by parents in language classes to learn the native language
	Parent Involvement	Parents are actively involved in getting their child to learn their mother tongue.
	Speaking English more commonly	Upon moving to Singapore, English became a more common language for communication.
<b>External expectations</b>	Parental expectations for education	Focuses upon parents expecting higher grades and better academic performance from children
	Parental expectations for culture	It focuses on parents expecting their children to pass down their traditional culture.
	School expectations	The school expects different things from their students, such as creativity.

<b>Balancing both cultures</b>	Transparency in Communication	Being transparent with parents and Family about societal and cultural expectations of the new culture
	Cultural identity switch	Depending upon interactions with colleagues of different cultures and family members, respondents have to switch between cultures.
	Language switch	While respondents are required to speak English within Singapore, they still strive to maintain their proficiency in their native language.
<b>Stereotyping and prejudices</b>	Racism - existence and lack of	While a few might experience racism, some respondents believe that the multicultural nature of Singapore makes it open to people of color.
	Stereotypes - positive and negative	Stereotyping based on skin color and ethnicity, preconceived notions on people based on their culture.

Indian and Chinese first-generation immigrants were asked about their first migration struggles to Singapore. According to the question posed, the theme of "Struggles faced" was generated, producing three codes: culture, weather, and language. One Indian and one Chinese respondent said the cultural differences made adjusting to Singapore problematic. First-generation Indian immigrant said, "Culturally, I was working in a local organization. I am still working for a local organization that has very few foreigners. So adjusting to the local way of working, communicating, discussing, and agreeing was very different from what I was brought up with." A First-generation Chinese immigrant reported, "The culture mix here has a good surprise or positive impact on me. I felt quite happy with this mixed culture thing." The responses suggest that the Indian respondents had difficulty adjusting to Singaporean culture, and due to language, they even faced specific communication difficulties. Meanwhile, Chinese respondents viewed Singapore's mixed culture as positively impactful. Likewise, both Indian respondents struggled with adapting to the weather, while one Chinese respondent said they preferred the weather in Singapore.

Respondent 1 stated, "Singapore has, you know, a tropical climate, so the weather is typically hot." Respondent 4, a first-generation Chinese immigrant, had contrasting views: "I actually freeze for summer, so I like the weather in Singapore. So I do not think weather is a problem." The results show that first-generation Indian immigrants struggled more with acclimatizing to Singaporean weather than their Chinese counterparts, who preferred it. Indian and Chinese first-generation immigrants faced similar language struggles in Singapore. Singapore is known for its English dialect, "Singlish." Respondent 3 expressed struggles understanding this language when they first came to Singapore: "The language, the Singlish, I need to adapt to." Respondent 2, a first-generation Indian immigrant, said, "The biggest struggle when I moved here was not being able to understand the language. People mostly spoke in Singlish, and I had difficulty understanding that." From the interview responses, it can be understood that both ethnicities faced vastly differing struggles while immigrating to Singapore but shared a few identical struggles. Indian and Chinese first-generation immigrants were asked about the evolution of their cultural identity throughout their time in Singapore.

According to the question posed, the "Cultural Evolution" theme was generated, producing two codes: cultural mixing and open-mindedness. Numerous respondents state that their arrival in Singapore has evolved their cultural identity and perception of other cultures. Respondent 1 quotes, "I think today, Singapore is a lot more multinational...So I have become adept at understanding what works." Both Chinese respondents also shared similar thoughts while immigrating to Singapore. "dealing with people from various backgrounds and religions is pretty unique." "I think it is mainly time to change the perspective," Respondent 3 and Respondent 4 mentioned. Due to Singapore's multinational society, most immigrants are flustered at first but enjoy the cultural mix as time progresses. Cultural mixing has also been integral to immigrants' lives as they become familiar with the Singaporean environment. Most of them find the cultural mixing unique and take time to acclimate.

Respondent 4 shared his views: "The longer I stay here, the more I start to, you know, get to know new friends and get more familiar with the environment. I made many new friends here, which helped a lot. Then eventually, when I settled down for years, as my Family, kids, and part of the new, you know, the new involvement. So it took quite a while. Respondent 3 reported, "Culture-wise, I guess I am more used to mixed culture people." Overall, cultural mixing was a pleasant experience for respondents and was a unique exposure. Indian and Chinese first-generation immigrants were asked how they have maintained cultural traditions since immigrating to Singapore. According to the question posed, the theme of "Maintaining Cultural Traditions" was generated, producing two codes: Celebrating Native Holidays and Family Traditions. Both first-generation Indian respondents and one Chinese respondent stated that they maintained cultural traditions by celebrating native holidays, such as Holi, Diwali, and Chinese New Year. Respondent 1 said, "I invite all my friends and office colleagues to a Diwali party. We still go out and have Holi with friends. We still celebrate other cultural events. So that has remained an important part of growing up or living here in the city." Respondent 2 remarked, "While we were celebrating Diwali since most locals know about our festival, we invited them home. We share goodies with our neighbours. So these are the things that we do during our festival." While maintaining cultural traditions through



native holidays played an integral role in first-generation immigrants' lives, they also maintained traditions covertly, such as eating together as a family and celebrating festivals. Respondent 3, a first-generation Chinese immigrant, mentioned, "We all the people working overseas are supposed to return, and then we are supposed to meet up and eat together and share some traditional food. And then that is quite a traditional practice in Chinese culture, and it is quite important we still practice that." Through the stories of all these respondents, these immigrants value spending quality time with their families and enjoy celebrating their cultural holidays. They all cherished the opportunity to celebrate their native festivals and maintain their cultural traditions. Indian and Chinese first-generation immigrants were asked how their cultural background influenced how they raised their kids in Singaporean society. According to the question posed, the "Influence on Children" theme produced four codes: language, festivals, values, and maintaining balance in cultures.

Respondent 2 and Respondent 4 shared similar perspectives on the language aspect of their kids' lives; Respondent 2 cited, "At home, we speak Hindi so that we can maintain our culture. We can maintain our language. Because I do feel that with language, you maintain your culture." Similarly, Respondent 4 reported, "Of course, Chinese. We prefer to continue to speak Chinese at home." Festivals were the most recurring code respondents used to answer this question; all four respondents stated something about festivals influencing their children. Respondent 1 remarked, "The second part was appreciating different festivals and events. Again, we have been sure that that is going to pass on-some of the, you know, Pujas, which are, you know, holy events. We continue to do so. And it will ensure that my kids are aware of that, and they follow it." Respondent 4 also remarked, "Now, of course, we celebrate all those Chinese festivals at home that are part of culture."

Along with some recurring codes, the responses also have recurring themes, especially regarding values. Most first-generation immigrants value respecting elders and maintaining fundamental traditional values. Respondent 3 stated, "There is still some Chinese cultural value we carry. For example, be humble, be, you know, just respect the elderly, and always take care of young people." Respondents one also stated, "I guess an important part of the cultural background was that you must ensure that you respect your elders. I think we have tried to ensure that we pass on the same values to the next generation." Finally, many parents realized that their children, growing up in a multinational country, will be exposed to numerous cultures. Hence, they emphasized the need to balance cultures. They expressed that they want their children to have the opportunity to explore new cultures while also having sufficient information about their own. Respondent 3 discussed "the term of traditional culture, which we want him to continue to carry and value,

but we are also open to all the positive stuff from various cultural backgrounds. We can always learn good things from each other and common good things in different cultural backgrounds." Indian and Chinese second-generation immigrants were asked how connected they feel to their parents' homeland since they are second-generation immigrants in Singapore. According to the question posed, the theme of "Connection with parents' Homeland" was generated, which produced four codes: Culture, Family, religious celebrations, and eating traditional food. One respondent expressed feeling connected with their homeland through eating traditional food. Respondent 5 said, "I eat much Indian food." Indian respondents celebrated religious festivals and culture to connect to their parent's homeland.

Respondent 5 cites, "If I were thinking about it culturally, I would think, yes, I am. Like, I do everything. I am very religious. I participate in all the religious celebrations." Respondent 6 affirmed, "I would say that I feel very connected because, you know, Indian culture is a big part of my life. My parents made it an important factor to carry forward no matter where they live." Respondent 7 cited, "Yeah. Like, I think I'm quite familiar with Taiwanese culture, even in modern-day culture, because I have many cousins and extended Family that are still here, and I think we are quite close. Thus, there is a lot of connection through that, too." Lastly, Family was a significant measurement of how connected respondents felt to their parents' homeland. Respondent 6 expressed how being geographically closer to their parent's homeland made them feel more connected, "especially after I moved to Singapore and I was closer and distant to India, I have been, like, going there a lot more often, which helps me feel more connected because I can, you know, like, visit more often than I did when I lived in the US." Reciprocally, respondent 8's parents have adopted their new country as their homeland, so the respondent feels very connected: "I live in my parents' homeland, so I feel pretty connected."

Indian and Chinese second-generation immigrants were asked about their ability to speak their mother tongue and the process of learning the language. According to the question posed, the theme of "Language" was generated, which produced 5 Codes: forced to learn the native language, talking with Family in the native language, language classes, parent involvement, and speaking English more commonly. Nearly all respondents expressed that they were forced to learn their native language from a young age; parents would impose many rules to ensure their kids spoke in their mother tongue, "they would not, like, respond to me when I spoke unless I spoke to them in Tamil. So that kind of emphasizes having me carry out my mother tongue and make sure that it is fluent for me. Yeah," reported respondent 6. All the respondents experienced different methods to ensure that they knew their language; for instance, respondent 8 had to take language classes, "Since, like, birth, I have had, like,

Mandarin lessons in school and, like, outside of school...Chinese lessons every Friday." Respondent 7 would have to consistently talk to their relatives and Family in order not to forget their native language, "my parents would, would kind of force me and my brother to video call my grandparents, like, every week so that we could practice, our mother tongue and also, just connect culturally, back to Taiwan." In the case of respondent 7, the constant repetition guaranteed that they became fluent in their native language, "Like, she would make me write down all the letters, repeat them, write them down like 20 times, and write down each letter. And then, most normally, I would talk with family members in Tamil, and over time, as I spoke more and more, that strengthened." While each respondent had different methods of learning the language, some trends were noticed for the respondents collectively. They all slowly lost touch with the language when they immigrated to Singapore, and most of their interactions with their siblings or people of their generation were in English.

Respondent 5 affirmed, "At home, it is around 70:30 English. Yeah. Because yeah. So typically, it is English because I feel like a better English speaker. So, typically, when I communicate with my parents, it is English." Respondent 6 also said similar things: "There is still a little bit of English when I speak, but it is Tamil. To my brother, it is usually English." Finally, Respondent 8 mentioned that they rarely use the language now that they are older except when talking to grandparents: "No. I hardly use the language besides my grandparents." Indian and Chinese second-generation immigrants were asked how they coped with cultural expectations from older generations while living in Singapore. According to the question posed, the theme of "External Expectations" was generated, which produced three codes: parental expectation for education, parental expectations for culture, and school expectations.

All parents of Asian descent have high expectations for academics and careers, which they enforce on their children.

Respondent 5 said, "My parents, culturally, grew up in India. It was, well, I guess, beaten into them that hard work, grades, and studies were the only things that mattered. Only the smartest get what they want. And I guess they tried to imprint that on me." Respondent 8 also had very similar experiences: "I think, like, Singapore and, like, Chinese households, like, they expect their kids to, like, do in school and, like, come home with good grades." Respondent 6 also expressed parental expectations on academics, which differed from the typical expectations that respondents 5 and 8 experienced. They had expectations from their parents to put extra emphasis on studies and less on social life. "I think India and Indian culture puts a very strong emphasis on, you know, studies and always putting that first. Seeing, spending time with your friends, and seeing when going out is second nature. But I think that is, like, growing up in New York and

then coming here to an international school, my parents and I struggled a little bit to try and help me find a balance between my school life and my life outside of school." This also leads us to how different academic and social expectations from the school can differ from your cultural expectations. Respondent 6 mentions how having a life outside school was socially significant and constantly balanced those two aspects. Respondent 5 also shared the school's academic expectations: "My school values creativity and, like, really focusing on one thing or multiple things, in fact, rather than just having your grades as your whole perspective." Cultural expectations also include passing down your heritage to the next generation. Respondent 7 says, "My parents expect me to honor and, like, pass down my, like, traditional culture, like, from Taiwan." Indian and Chinese second-generation immigrants were asked about their ability to balance both cultures while living in Singapore. According to the question posed, the theme of "Cultural Balancing" was generated, which produced five codes: transparency in communication, cultural identity switch, language switch, influx of foreigners, and partaking in festivals.

As second-generation immigrants, all respondents stated they had problems balancing their cultures as they became acclimatized to Singaporean culture. The challenges ranged from social to academic. Respondent 5, for example, felt like they had trouble balancing their cultural identity while talking to them; they expressed the constant need to switch identities while talking to different people: "I think I always have that aspect of my Indian heritage with me. Yes. It is not as present when I communicate with my, let's say, my Chinese friends or my American friends or just random strangers in general. It is not that present in me. But that is when my Singaporean heritage and American heritage come in. But I think overall, normally, it kind of switches person by person. So I think it does, like, my cultural identity switches a lot, but it is not consciously."

While Respondent 5 struggled with their cultural identity, Respondent 7 tried to maintain his native heritage while still enjoying their Singaporean identity. "I still much prefer Taiwanese cuisine over Singaporean cuisine. And it is just a personal opinion, but I think that is what I am used to. But, other than that, I think I look at the better parts of each culture and try to take as much of it as possible by taking advantage of both." Because of the significant cultural shifts from their native countries to Singapore, respondent 6 had trouble balancing their parents' expectations and their expectations of social life. Respondent 6 cited mitigating this struggle through transparency: "So, as I mentioned, I think transparency is essential when having these kinds of conversations. So the method that my parents and I went about is, you know, like, informing them. Right? Like, just telling them, like, yeah. I will do this for school, and then I will do this to balance and do my other activities. So, I

am just being open with them about it and discussing things such as grades and other plans. I think that is the way that I went about it." Respondent 8 said they tried to balance their two cultures by participating in festivals. Attending native festivals and celebrating with families ensures a way to balance the different cultures. "This could be just maintaining some values and partaking in some festivals. Yeah. Like every Chinese New Year, we visit my grandparents' house and partake in traditional Chinese traditions. Yeah. Such as games and meals, and we watch Chinese shows. So that kind of, like, that, like, 3 days a year helps me remember and practice traditions from my Family's background." Indian and Chinese second-generation immigrants were asked how they are perceived in Singapore as immigrants in a multinational country. According to the question posed, the theme of "Stereotyping and Perception" was generated, producing two codes: Stereotypes and Subtle Racism. Indian second-generation immigrants and Chinese second-generation immigrants had massively contrasting views on racism in Singapore. Respondent 5 reported, "Like, in the past, I have been stopped outside my condo and asked multiple times if I lived there just because of my skin color."

Respondent 6 also reported, "Like, even though it is a joke, sometimes, people I know have referred to me as, like, migrant worker, right... So I think that is one thing. It is just a subtle racism, honestly. Like, no one has ever come to my face and said something, like, wildly racist." While a few might experience racism, some respondents believe that the multicultural nature of Singapore makes it open to people of color. Respondent 7 referenced, "Singaporeans are used to seeing, like, people of, like, all cultures, so they do not pay much attention, like, to, like, what culture you are from. And, like, there is barely any racism in Singapore from what I see." Although Chinese and Indian immigrants had very different responses to racism in Singapore, collectively, they had all experienced positive and negative stereotypes. Respondent 5 says, "Like, many people think, oh, just because he is Indian. He is very hardworking. He is very smart, which is, like, I guess you could say is a plus, but which may not necessarily be true on the other hand." Respondent 7 explains, "I think because I am Chinese, many people assume I am smart and, like, good at math. And, like, also, many times in the hawker centres, like, instead of speaking English, they will immediately start talking in Chinese, like, as they think that I will understand Chinese and, like, I am fluent in Chinese."

#### 4. Discussion

Singapore is renowned as a highly diverse multicultural society comprising numerous cultures and social classes. Despite the wide range of ethnic groups, Integration between the groups is minimal and only occurs in required settings, such as workplaces. To thoroughly understand the problem between groups, this paper explores and analyzes the cultural identity and differences in cross-cultural accommodation

experienced by Indian and Chinese immigrants in Singapore, focusing on the distinctions between first- and second-generation immigrants. By examining each community's varying historical and social contexts, this paper aims to understand how individuals strive to assimilate into their new culture while preserving their cultural heritage as immigrants. Specifically, this paper addresses individuals' complexities and challenges and how they overcome them. The research also examines the perceived cultural distance of immigrants and how the Integration of multicultural identity influences their adaptation process. Moreover, the study enhances our understanding of the different generations of immigrants regarding cultural transformations, the impact of gender on immigration, and its wider ramifications for policymakers worldwide who deal with Integration in multicultural societies.

This research aims to contribute to the growing discourse on this genre and the increasingly globalized world through statistical analysis and qualitative data. The results of the present study indicate no significant difference between first- and second-generation immigrants in terms of perceived cultural distance. In other words, second-generation immigrants do not necessarily feel a significantly lower cultural gap than their first-generation counterparts. Hence, more prolonged exposure to a multicultural society does not reduce the perception of perceived cultural distance. This finding, however, is inconsistent with other studies conducted in the United States. The study states that second-generation Indians are experiencing a more fluid and unstable cultural identity (Bhandari, 2018). Another study suggests that first-generation immigrants experience greater cultural distance and identify more strongly with the culture of their origin, indicating a greater perceived cultural distance (Maehler et al., 2020). This pattern is also demonstrated in studies conducted in Luxembourg.

The findings reveal that second-generation Portuguese immigrants, compared to first-generation Portuguese immigrants, were more "compatible" with the culture in Luxembourg, illustrating a difference in cultural distance between generations (Barros et al., 2019). While the previous three studies presented findings inconsistent with the present study, a survey of how first-generation and second-generation Asian Americans negotiate cultural differences reported that both generations faced similar struggles and challenges (Bhandari, 2019). However, when comparing ethnic groups, the results show a significant difference in perceived cultural distance between Indian and Chinese immigrants. Indians are reported to feel a higher perceived cultural distance than Chinese immigrants. This suggests that Indian immigrants experience a more significant challenge in adapting to Singaporean society and feel a sense of distance. These results are comparable to a study held in the United States, where it was reported that Indian immigrants faced more conflicts adapting to American culture than any other

immigrant. Indian immigrants faced concerns over dependency, competition, loneliness, and changing values (Juthani, 1992). Similarly, it has been found that Indian immigrants are less likely to adopt Asian American personas while immigrating to the United States compared to any other Asian subgroups (Schachter, 2014). However, numerous studies also show similarities in cultural distance between Indian and Chinese immigrants. One study suggests that both ethnic groups face integration challenges despite economic success. These challenges include cultural and linguistic troubles (Hooper and Groves, 2017). On the Multicultural Identity Integration Scale (MULTIIS), there were no significant differences between first- and second-generation immigrants and the two ethnic groups.

This suggests that generational status does not influence how individuals integrate with one another, and ethnicity has no impact on individuals' ability to blend in. However, other findings do not affirm this. It was recorded that first-generation immigrants exhibited greater family solidarity and were less open to Integration than their predecessors (Schuengel et al., 2009). This is also supported by a study conducted in Germany, which found that second-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany had an easier time integrating into society and entering the workforce (Brünig, 2010). This concept is further supported by studies that state that differences in ethnic origin and exposure to the host country impact the methods of Integration (Jonsson et al., 2018). A finding from the statistical analysis is the moderate positive correlation between Perceived Cultural Distance and Multicultural Identity Integration. This suggests that individuals who perceive a greater cultural distance will also be more likely to engage in activities to reconcile that disparity and make greater efforts to integrate with Singaporean society.

Finally, the regression analysis tables confirm that multicultural identity integration predicts perceived cultural distance significantly and vice versa. This would mean how immigrants perceive their cultural distance influences how they integrate their cultural identities. This can also be applied reversibly. The statistical analysis underscores the complexities of cultural Integration and cultural distance in a multicultural society like Singapore. While age did not differ in how immigrants responded to these scales, ethnic backgrounds played a significant role in developing these experiences. Moreover, the positive correlation between both scales and the considerable predictors suggests that cross-cultural accommodation is an ongoing process influenced by each individual's heritage. The qualitative data conveys the nuances of each individual's experiences and how their social contexts and backgrounds influenced their perspectives. Naturally, respondents shared numerous related experiences; however, some experiences still stood out as heavily contrasting. Stereotyping was mentioned by various second-generation immigrants, both positively and negatively. This

is reflected in multiple other settings, such as the United States. It was described that second-generation immigrants in urban areas struggled with racial stereotypes based on their ethnic groups (Saran and Diaz, 2010). Nearly all second-generation Indians also recorded subtle racism while in school and generally in public. Likewise, second-generation Indian Americans experience racial socialization through discussions of race and racism, awareness of racial and cultural differences, and intra- and inter-group biases (Davidson et al., 2024). Second-generation immigrants faced greater difficulties with external factors and influences, while first-generation immigrants encountered internal challenges, such as maintaining traditional values and customs.

First-generation immigrants experiencing challenges retaining their ethnic identity is a recurring theme among papers. For example, it has been reported that first-generation Asian Indian immigrants struggled to maintain their cultural identity and pass it on to their children. In contrast, second-generation immigrants faced additional challenges due to external environmental factors (Beaumont et al., 2007). While this covers just the surface of the similarities and differences between immigrants, it represents the patterns and themes they undergo. Compared to the quantitative data, generational status and ethnicity play a role in how individuals assimilate and maintain their cultural identity.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined how Indian and Chinese immigrants in Singapore perceive cultural distance and engage in multicultural Integration across generations. The statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in the perceived cultural distance between first- and second-generation immigrants. Generational differences do not significantly impact cultural distance or the Integration of multicultural identities. This suggests that second-generation immigrants do not necessarily feel closer to their dominant culture than their ethnic culture. However, ethnic background plays a role in their cultural distance. It was concluded that Indian immigrants experienced higher cultural distance than their Chinese counterparts, indicating varying adaptation experiences between the two groups.

Despite these differences in perceived cultural distance, the Multicultural Integration Scale remains constant across ethnic and generational groups. This highlights that immigrants use similar methods to integrate identity regardless of background. Another key finding is the moderate positive correlation between perceived cultural distance and the Multicultural Identity Integration Scale, suggesting that individuals who perceive a greater cultural distance will also put in more effort to integrate and mitigate those troubles. This reinforces the idea that cultural adaptations are dynamic and nuanced. Further analysis confirms a bidirectional relationship between cultural distance and identity integration, supporting the claims made

in the preceding paragraph regarding the correlation between cultural distance and integration efforts. These findings emphasize the complex nature of cultural formation in a diverse society like Singapore. Overall, this study will provide valuable insights into the adaptations of Indian and Chinese immigrants in Singapore. The findings reveal that cultural Integration is not a straightforward process that evolves over generations but a continuum shaped by personal experiences, societal expectations, and ethnic backgrounds. While some may experience success in maintaining a dual identity, this is not consistent among all, as some continue to struggle with cultural distance and Integration. Together, these results contribute to a deeper understanding of the assimilation process of Indian and Chinese immigrants, offering implications for policies that foster inclusive cultural Integration.

### 5.1. Limitations

- The present study employed a sample size of N=86, of which 53 were Indian, and 33 were of Chinese origin. A larger sample size can help produce more accurate findings that can be easily generalized to the broader population of Indian and Chinese immigrants living in Singapore.
- In the present study, most respondents come from similar socioeconomic classes, indicating that their experiences might be similar. This also impacts how the respondents perform in the survey and interviews. To tackle this concern, future research can consider different socioeconomic groups.

- Gaining access to respondents for interviews was challenging during the present study. Primarily for the Chinese interviewees, obstacles such as a lack of proper response, no-shows, and denial of participation in the interview process were faced.
- The researcher had trouble reaching out and gaining access to second-generation Chinese respondents. Problems included a lack of communication, slow response time, and a small survey size for that population.

### 5.2. Future Recommendations

- Future researchers can consider various socioeconomic classes and try to gain access to a larger survey size.
- Local Singaporean and immigrant groups should look to integrate by participating in each other's festivals and cultural practices.
- Future research should compare the cultural Integration of Singapore to other countries in Southeast Asia to understand the differences and how they can learn from each other.
- Future researchers can incorporate other ethnic groups outside Indians and Chinese, like Malays and European expats.
- Parents should encourage children to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds and form meaningful connections.
- The research can be an example of international policymakers grappling with Integration and cross-cultural accommodation challenges.

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