




Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Values in Bicultural Families

Farhad. Namjoo^{1*}, Netty. Herawati², Rizwan Hassan. Bhat³

¹ Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

² Department of Social Science & Cultural Science, Program Study of Psychology, University of Trunojoyo Madura, East Java, Indonesia

³ Lecturer, All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Mumbai, India

* Corresponding author email address: farhadnamjoo@kmanresce.ca

Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Namjoo, F., Herawati, N., & Bhat, R.H. (2023). Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Values in Bicultural Families. *Journal of Psychosociological Research in Family and Culture*, 1(3), 38-44. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jprfc.1.3.6>



© 2023 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to explore the intergenerational transmission of cultural values within bicultural families, focusing on how these families preserve their cultural heritage, adapt to their host society, and navigate the associated challenges.

Methods: This qualitative research employed semi-structured interviews with 21 participants from diverse bicultural backgrounds. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a variety of cultural perspectives. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software, following a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes related to cultural value transmission.

Results: The analysis revealed three main themes: preservation of cultural practices, adaptation and integration, and challenges and negotiations. Cultural preservation was achieved through traditional ceremonies, language use, cuisine, arts and crafts, and dress. Adaptation involved blending cultures, educational influences, social interactions, and media use. Challenges included generational conflicts, identity issues, discrimination, acculturation stress, balancing preservation with change, and economic factors. These findings align with existing literature on biculturalism and cultural transmission.

Conclusion: The study highlights the complex dynamics of cultural value transmission in bicultural families, emphasizing the importance of supportive societal structures and policies. The findings suggest that family therapists, educators, and policymakers should consider these dynamics to effectively support bicultural families in maintaining their cultural heritage while adapting to their host society. Future research should expand on these findings by exploring additional variables and employing longitudinal designs.

Keywords: Intergenerational transmission, cultural values, bicultural families, qualitative research, cultural preservation, adaptation, generational conflicts, identity issues.

1 Introduction

Cultural value transmission is a critical component of family life, influencing how individuals understand their cultural identity and navigate the broader societal context. As Akyıl et al. (2015) highlight, the transmission of values within families occurs against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society, necessitating adaptive strategies to maintain cultural continuity (Akyıl et al., 2015). Family therapists, therefore, must consider these dynamics to provide effective support to bicultural families. Similarly, Boehnke (2001) emphasizes that value transmission is deeply embedded in societal contexts, where parents play a pivotal role in imparting cultural norms and values to their offspring (Boehnke, 2001).

The process of identity formation in bicultural families is inherently complex. Children in these families often experience a dual socialization process, learning to navigate and integrate multiple cultural identities. Kim and Hou (2016) discuss the role of bicultural socialization in Chinese American families, where intergenerational transmission of cultural orientations helps children develop a balanced sense of identity (Kim & Hou, 2016). This dual socialization can lead to a rich, multifaceted identity but also presents challenges, such as managing conflicting cultural expectations and experiences of bicultural stress (Tran, 2024).

Various methods are employed by bicultural families to transmit cultural values. Traditional ceremonies, language use, cuisine, arts, and dress are prominent avenues through which cultural heritage is preserved. Albert and Coimbra (2017) note that family cultures, especially in the context of migration and aging, rely on these tangible expressions of culture to maintain a sense of continuity. These methods serve as vehicles for imparting values such as respect, familial loyalty, and community solidarity (Albert & Coimbra, 2017).

Despite the best efforts of bicultural families, the transmission of cultural values is fraught with challenges. Generational conflicts often arise when younger family members resist traditional practices, viewing them as outdated or incompatible with their contemporary lives (Akyıl et al., 2015). Identity issues, such as cultural identity confusion and bicultural stress, further complicate this process (Tran, 2024). Additionally, discrimination and bias experienced in the broader society can hinder the effective transmission of cultural values, as noted by Sangalang and

Vang (2016) in their study of intergenerational trauma in refugee families (Sangalang & Vang, 2016).

Parents play a crucial role as cultural intermediaries, mediating between their cultural heritage and the host society. Tam and Chan (2015) describe parents as cultural middlemen who facilitate the integration of cultural values into their children's lives (Tam & Chan, 2015). This role is particularly salient in educational settings, where schools can either reinforce or undermine familial efforts to transmit cultural values. As Calzada et al. (2009) observe, cultural adaptation and the educational environment significantly influence child functioning and the effectiveness of cultural transmission (Calzada et al., 2009).

Theoretical perspectives on cultural transmission emphasize the importance of perceived norms and the broader societal context. Tam (2015) argues that perceived norms play a critical role in shaping the intergenerational transmission of culture (Tam, 2015). This perspective is supported by Huff and Lee (2015), who highlight the psychological and contextual factors influencing perceived norms and cultural transmission. Moreover, Kim (2011) underscores the role of cultural factors in theories of intergenerational transmission, noting that these factors must be considered to fully understand the dynamics at play (Huff & Lee, 2015).

Research on bicultural socialization provides valuable insights into how bicultural families navigate the transmission of cultural values. Knight et al. (2011) explore the familial socialization of culturally related values in Mexican American families, highlighting the strategies parents use to instill cultural values in their children (Knight et al., 2011). Similarly, Shein and Zhou (2023) examine the relations between family cultural socialization and bicultural identity integration in Burmese college students of refugee background, shedding light on the long-term impacts of these processes (Shein & Zhou, 2023).

The findings from this study have important implications for societal and policy considerations. Spierings (2014) discusses how migration and parents' attitudes influence gender equality attitudes among Turks in Western Europe and Turkey, suggesting that policies promoting multiculturalism and support for immigrant families can facilitate the transmission of cultural values (Spierings, 2014). Umaña-Taylor and Hill (2020) emphasize the role of ethnic-racial socialization in shaping family dynamics and outcomes, further underscoring the need for supportive policies and interventions (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020).

The intergenerational transmission of cultural values in bicultural families is a dynamic and multifaceted process that requires a nuanced understanding of the various factors at play. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on cultural transmission by providing a qualitative exploration of the experiences of bicultural families. By examining the methods, challenges, and theoretical underpinnings of cultural transmission, this research offers valuable insights for family therapists, educators, policymakers, and scholars interested in supporting bicultural families in maintaining their cultural heritage while navigating the complexities of a multicultural society.

In conclusion, the intergenerational transmission of cultural values within bicultural families is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of these families as they strive to maintain their cultural heritage amidst the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The insights gained from this study underscore the importance of supportive societal structures and policies in facilitating the effective transmission of cultural values across generations.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the intergenerational transmission of cultural values in bicultural families. The focus on qualitative methods allows for an in-depth understanding of the nuanced experiences and perspectives of family members regarding their cultural practices and values.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of bicultural families. A total of 15 families, each consisting of at least one parent and one child, participated in the research. The families represented various cultural backgrounds, including but not limited to Asian, Latin American, African, and European heritages. The participants' ages ranged from 10 to 65 years, providing a comprehensive view of intergenerational perspectives.

Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes or insights were emerging from the interviews. This approach ensured that the data were robust and comprehensive, providing a solid foundation for the analysis.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were chosen for their flexibility and ability to elicit rich, detailed responses. The interviews were conducted with both parents and children separately to capture individual viewpoints. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences with cultural practices, the significance of these practices, and the perceived transmission of cultural values across generations. Sample questions included:

"Can you describe any cultural traditions or practices that are important in your family?"

"How do you feel these traditions have been passed down through your family?"

"What values do you associate with these cultural practices?"

2.3 Data Analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using NVivo software, which facilitated the organization and coding of qualitative data. The analysis followed a thematic approach, where patterns and themes related to the transmission of cultural values were identified and categorized.

Initial coding was performed to break down the data into manageable segments. These segments were then grouped into broader themes that reflected common patterns across the interviews. The themes were continually refined and validated through an iterative process of comparing the coded data with the raw interview transcripts.

3 Findings and Results

The study included a total of 21 participants, representing a diverse range of bicultural families. The participants' ages ranged from 10 to 65 years, with a mean age of 35.7 years. The sample consisted of 11 females and 10 males. Each family included at least one parent and one child, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of intergenerational perspectives. The educational background of the participants varied, with 12 holding a college degree, 5 having completed high school, and 4 participants having some form of postgraduate education. Additionally, the socio-economic status of the participants ranged from lower-middle to upper-

middle class, providing a broad perspective on the intergenerational transmission of cultural values across different socio-economic contexts.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Concepts
1. Preservation of Cultural Practices	1.1 Traditional Ceremonies	Cultural rituals, Family gatherings, Religious practices
	1.2 Language Use	Native language at home, Bilingualism, Language classes
	1.3 Cuisine and Food	Traditional recipes, Family meals, Cultural festivals
	1.4 Arts and Crafts	Traditional art, Handicrafts, Cultural exhibitions
	1.5 Dress and Attire	Traditional clothing, Cultural dress codes, Costume making
2. Adaptation and Integration	2.1 Blending Cultures	Fusion traditions, Hybrid celebrations, Mixed-language communication
	2.2 Educational Influence	Cultural education programs, Multicultural schools, Cultural awareness curriculum
	2.3 Social Interactions	Cross-cultural friendships, Community events, Intercultural marriages
	2.4 Media and Technology	Ethnic media, Social media influence, Online cultural communities
3. Challenges and Negotiations	3.1 Generational Conflicts	Different value systems, Resistance to change, Parent-child disagreements
	3.2 Identity Issues	Cultural identity confusion, Bicultural stress, Sense of belonging
	3.3 Discrimination and Bias	Experiences of racism, Cultural stereotypes, Identity-based prejudice
	3.4 Acculturation Stress	Adapting to new norms, Balancing dual identities, Psychological stress
	3.5 Preservation vs. Change	Resistance to assimilation, Negotiating cultural shifts, Intergenerational dialogue
	3.6 Legal and Social Policies	Immigration laws, Multicultural policies, Community support programs
	3.7 Economic Factors	Financial stability, Employment challenges, Economic integration

3.1 Preservation of Cultural Practices

Traditional Ceremonies: Many families maintained their cultural heritage through traditional ceremonies. Participants described how rituals such as weddings, funerals, and religious holidays were pivotal in passing down values. One participant noted, "We celebrate Lunar New Year with all the traditional customs. It's a way for us to stay connected to our roots."

Language Use: The use of native language within the household was a significant aspect of cultural preservation. Parents emphasized the importance of their children speaking their native language. "We speak Spanish at home to make sure our children don't lose touch with our culture," explained one parent. Concepts related to this subcategory included native language at home, bilingualism, and language classes.

Cuisine and Food: Sharing traditional meals was another common way families preserved their cultural identity. Families often prepared traditional recipes and participated in cultural festivals centered around food. "Cooking and eating our traditional foods is a big part of how we stay connected as a family," said one participant.

Arts and Crafts: Engaging in traditional arts and crafts, such as creating handicrafts or participating in cultural exhibitions, was highlighted by many participants. A mother shared, "I teach my children how to make traditional pottery, just as my mother taught me."

Dress and Attire: Wearing traditional clothing during cultural celebrations was a symbol of cultural pride. Participants described making or purchasing traditional garments for special occasions. "We wear our traditional dresses during festivals; it's a way to show respect to our ancestors," mentioned one interviewee.

3.2 Adaptation and Integration

Blending Cultures: Families often blended traditions from both cultures to create new, hybrid celebrations. This included fusion traditions and mixed-language communication. One participant shared, "We combine elements from both our cultures in our holiday celebrations. It makes them unique and special to our family."

Educational Influence: The role of education in cultural transmission was significant, with cultural education programs and multicultural schools providing support. "Our children's school has a multicultural curriculum that helps

them understand and appreciate both sides of their heritage," said a parent.

Social Interactions: Cross-cultural friendships and community events played a crucial role in how families adapted and integrated. "We attend community events that celebrate different cultures, which helps us feel a part of the larger society," noted one participant.

Media and Technology: Ethnic media and online cultural communities provided platforms for maintaining cultural connections. "We watch shows and follow social media channels in our native language, which keeps us connected to our culture," explained one interviewee.

3.3 Challenges and Negotiations

Generational Conflicts: Different value systems between generations often led to conflicts. Parents and children sometimes disagreed on cultural practices, leading to resistance to change. "My parents want me to follow all the old traditions, but I feel some of them are outdated," said a young participant.

Identity Issues: Many participants experienced cultural identity confusion and bicultural stress, struggling with a sense of belonging. "Sometimes I feel caught between two worlds and not fully accepted in either," shared one adolescent.

Discrimination and Bias: Experiences of racism and cultural stereotypes were common, affecting participants' sense of identity. "I've faced discrimination for my accent, which makes me feel like I don't belong," recounted one interviewee.

Acculturation Stress: Balancing dual identities and adapting to new norms caused psychological stress. "It's hard to fit in when you're trying to uphold your cultural values while also adapting to a new society," expressed a participant.

Preservation vs. Change: Families often negotiated between preserving cultural traditions and embracing change. "We try to keep our traditions alive, but we also need to adapt to the new environment," explained one parent. This subcategory included resistance to assimilation and intergenerational dialogue.

Legal and Social Policies: Immigration laws and multicultural policies significantly influenced families' experiences. "Support programs for immigrants have been crucial in helping us integrate while maintaining our cultural identity," noted one participant.

Economic Factors: Financial stability and employment challenges were additional factors impacting cultural transmission. "Economic pressures sometimes force us to prioritize survival over cultural practices," admitted one participant.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the intergenerational transmission of cultural values in bicultural families, focusing on the mechanisms of cultural preservation, adaptation, and the challenges faced in this process. Through semi-structured interviews with 21 participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, the findings highlighted three main themes: preservation of cultural practices, adaptation and integration, and challenges and negotiations. Each theme was further elaborated through subthemes such as traditional ceremonies, language use, blending cultures, generational conflicts, and acculturation stress.

The preservation of cultural practices was predominantly maintained through traditional ceremonies, language use, cuisine, arts and crafts, and dress and attire. Adaptation and integration were evident in the blending of cultures, educational influences, social interactions, and the use of media and technology. Challenges and negotiations were marked by generational conflicts, identity issues, experiences of discrimination and bias, acculturation stress, the balance between preservation and change, legal and social policies, and economic factors.

The findings align with the existing literature on cultural transmission and biculturalism. The importance of traditional ceremonies and language use in preserving cultural values is well-documented. Akyıl et al. (2015) emphasize that cultural rituals and language are critical in maintaining a sense of identity and continuity within families. This study corroborates their findings, showing that participants actively engaged in traditional ceremonies and used their native language to instill cultural values in their children (Akyıl et al., 2015).

The role of cuisine, arts, and dress in cultural preservation is also supported by Albert and Coimbra (2017), who highlight that tangible expressions of culture, such as food and traditional clothing, serve as powerful symbols of cultural identity (Albert & Coimbra, 2017). Participants in this study echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the significance of family meals, traditional recipes, and cultural attire in maintaining their cultural heritage.

Adaptation and integration, particularly through the blending of cultures and educational influences, were evident in the participants' experiences. Kim and Hou (2016) discuss how bicultural socialization helps children develop a balanced sense of identity by integrating elements from both cultures (Kim & Hou, 2016). This study found similar patterns, with families creating hybrid celebrations and educational environments that supported cultural awareness and integration.

The challenges faced by bicultural families, including generational conflicts and identity issues, are consistent with the literature on bicultural stress and identity confusion. Tran (2024) notes that managing dual cultural identities can lead to psychological stress and a sense of being caught between two worlds (Tran, 2024). Participants in this study reported similar experiences, highlighting the difficulty of balancing their cultural heritage with the norms of the host society.

Experiences of discrimination and bias further complicate the process of cultural transmission. Sangalang and Vang (2016) discuss the impact of intergenerational trauma and discrimination on refugee families, noting that such experiences can hinder cultural transmission and exacerbate identity struggles (Sangalang & Vang, 2016). Participants in this study reported facing racism and cultural stereotypes, which negatively affected their ability to transmit cultural values effectively.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, with 21 participants representing diverse cultural backgrounds. While this provided a broad perspective, it may not capture the full range of experiences within each cultural group. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data from interviews, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. Participants might have provided responses that they believed were socially acceptable or aligned with the perceived goals of the study.

Second, the study focused on bicultural families in a specific geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Cultural transmission processes can vary significantly based on the sociopolitical environment, immigration policies, and the availability of community support systems in different regions. Future research should consider a larger and more geographically diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research are suggested. First,

future studies should employ a longitudinal design to track the intergenerational transmission of cultural values over time. This approach would provide a more dynamic understanding of how cultural values evolve and are maintained across multiple generations. Longitudinal studies can also capture changes in cultural practices and identities in response to shifting societal contexts.

Second, future research should explore the role of specific factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and community support in the transmission of cultural values. Calzada et al. (2009) highlight the influence of cultural adaptation and educational environments on child functioning, suggesting that these factors play a critical role in cultural transmission (Calzada et al., 2009). Investigating how these variables interact with cultural practices can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the processes involved.

Third, there is a need for comparative studies that examine cultural transmission in different types of bicultural families, such as those with varying degrees of assimilation, acculturation strategies, and levels of cultural retention. Comparative studies can reveal the nuances and complexities of cultural transmission across different family dynamics and sociocultural contexts.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for family therapists, educators, and policymakers. For family therapists, understanding the mechanisms of cultural transmission and the challenges faced by bicultural families is crucial for providing culturally sensitive and effective support. Akyil et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of considering the rapidly changing societal context in therapy. Therapists should help families navigate generational conflicts and identity issues by fostering open communication and mutual understanding (Akyil et al., 2015).

Educators play a vital role in supporting the cultural integration and identity development of children from bicultural families. Schools should implement multicultural curricula that celebrate diverse cultural backgrounds and promote cultural awareness. As Kim and Hou (2016) suggest, educational programs that support bicultural socialization can help children develop a balanced sense of identity and reduce the stress associated with managing dual cultural identities (Kim & Hou, 2016).

Policymakers should consider the findings of this study when designing and implementing policies that affect bicultural families. Policies that promote multiculturalism, provide support for immigrant families, and address

discrimination and bias can facilitate the effective transmission of cultural values. Spierings (2014) highlights the impact of migration and parents' attitudes on gender equality, suggesting that supportive policies can enhance cultural integration and transmission (Spierings, 2014).

In conclusion, the intergenerational transmission of cultural values in bicultural families is a complex and dynamic process influenced by various factors. This study provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of cultural preservation, adaptation, and the challenges faced by these families. By addressing the limitations of this study and building on its findings, future research can further enhance our understanding of cultural transmission and inform practical interventions to support bicultural families in maintaining their cultural heritage while navigating the complexities of a multicultural society.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

References

- Akyıl, Y., Prouty, A. M., Blanchard, A., & Lyness, K. P. (2015). Experiences of Families Transmitting Values in a Rapidly Changing Society: Implications for Family Therapists. *Family Process, 55*(2), 368-381. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12163>
- Albert, I., & Coimbra, S. B. (2017). Family Cultures in the Context of Migration and Ageing. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 51*(2), 205-222. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9381-y>
- Boehnke, K. (2001). Parent-Offspring Value Transmission in a Societal Context. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*(2), 241-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022101032002010>
- Calzada, E. J., Brotman, L. M., Huang, K. Y., Bat-Chava, Y., & Kingston, S. (2009). Parent Cultural Adaptation and Child Functioning in Culturally Diverse, Urban Families of Preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 30*(4), 515-524. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2008.12.033>
- Huff, S., & Lee, F. (2015). People and Country: A Psychological and Contextual Perspective in Perceived Norms and Cultural Transmission. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46*(10), 1350-1352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115600263>
- Kim, S. Y., & Hou, Y. (2016). Intergenerational Transmission of Tridimensional Cultural Orientations in Chinese American Families: The Role of Bicultural Socialization. *Journal of youth and adolescence, 45*(7), 1452-1465. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0423-4>
- Knight, G. P., Berkel, C., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Gonzales, N. A., Ettekal, I., Jaconis, M., & Boyd, B. M. (2011). The Familial Socialization of Culturally Related Values in Mexican American Families. *Journal of marriage and family, 73*(5), 913-925. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2011.00856.x>
- Sangalang, C. C., & Vang, C. (2016). Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Families: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 19*(3), 745-754. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-016-0499-7>
- Shein, B., & Zhou, X. (2023). Understanding the Relations Between Family Cultural Socialization and Bicultural Identity Integration in Burmese College Students of Refugee Background. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 14*(4), 383-390. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000316>
- Spierings, N. (2014). Gender Equality Attitudes Among Turks in Western Europe and Turkey: The Interrelated Impact of Migration and Parents' Attitudes. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41*(5), 749-771. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2014.948394>
- Tam, K. P. (2015). Understanding Intergenerational Cultural Transmission Through the Role of Perceived Norms. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46*(10), 1260-1266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115600074>
- Tam, K. P., & Chan, H. W. (2015). Parents as Cultural Middlemen. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46*(4), 489-507. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115575739>
- Tran, C. (2024). "It's the Best of Both Worlds!": Investigating Bicultural Stress in Adult Bicultural Canadians. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies, 11*(1), 58-79. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1870>
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J., & Hill, N. E. (2020). Ethnic-Racial Socialization in the Family: A Decade's Advance on Precursors and Outcomes. *Journal of marriage and family, 82*(1), 244-271. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12622>