

# CULTURAL IDENTITY CLARITY: BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST RACE-BASED REJECTION SENSITIVITY

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## Introduction

Immigrants face many sources of stress during and after the process of migrating to a new country, including having expectations of being mistreated upon their arrival. These expectations can form if other people from one's country of origin were mistreated upon their arrival to Canada. **Race-based rejection sensitivity (RBRS)** refers to such a state of high anxiety and concern over, and having high expectations of being rejected because of membership in a stigmatized and/or marginalized racial group (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002).

One protective factor that has been observed to help people cope with the negative effects of perceived discrimination is strongly identifying with the targeted group (Giamo et al., 2012; Outten et al., 2009). Similarly, we suggest that having a clear understanding of one's heritage cultural identity can act as a protective factor to help immigrants cope with the negative effects of perceived discrimination. **Cultural identity clarity (CIC)** refers to the extent to which beliefs about one's cultural group are perceived to be clearly and confidently defined (Taylor & Osborne, 2010; Osborne & Taylor, 2010).

## Present Study

The aim of the present study was to examine the impact that race-based rejection sensitivity has on well-being (self-esteem (SE), life satisfaction (LS) and bicultural stress (stress over learning new norms and a new language while still holding on to the norms, values and beliefs of one's heritage culture; BS) , and to examine whether cultural identity clarity can protect one's well-being from the negative effects of race-based rejection sensitivity, in a community sample of Latino/a immigrants to Canada (N=137).

## Hypotheses

H1: RBRS → ↓ SE / ↓ LS / ↑ BS

H2: RBRS \* ↓ CIC → ↓ SE / ↓ LS / ↑ BS

RBRS \* ↑ CIC → ↑ SE / ↑ LS / ↓ BS

## Results

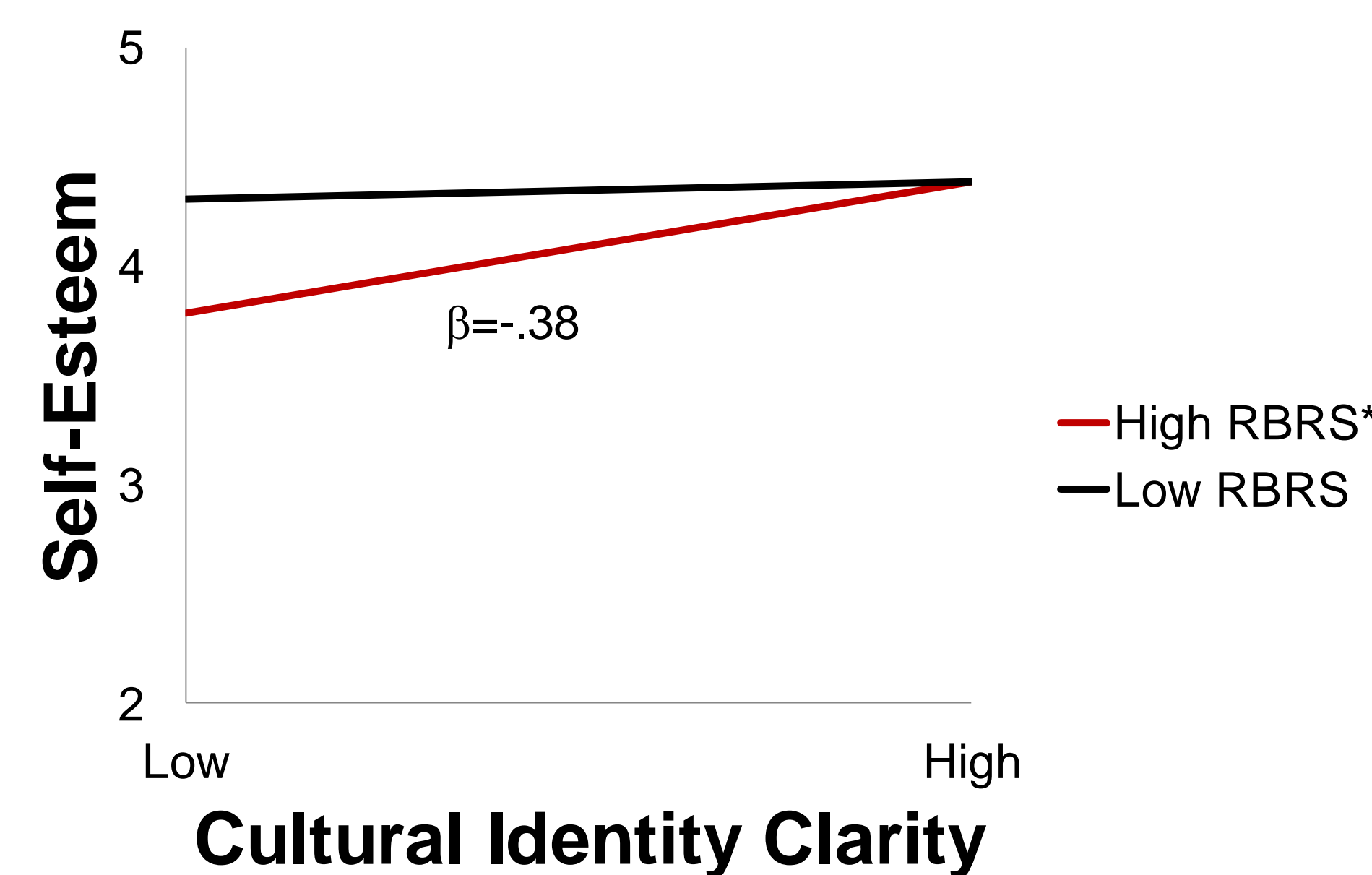


Figure 1. ↑ RBRS \* ↓ CIC = ↓ self-esteem

High RBRS and low CIC was associated with lower self-esteem,  $p < .001$ .

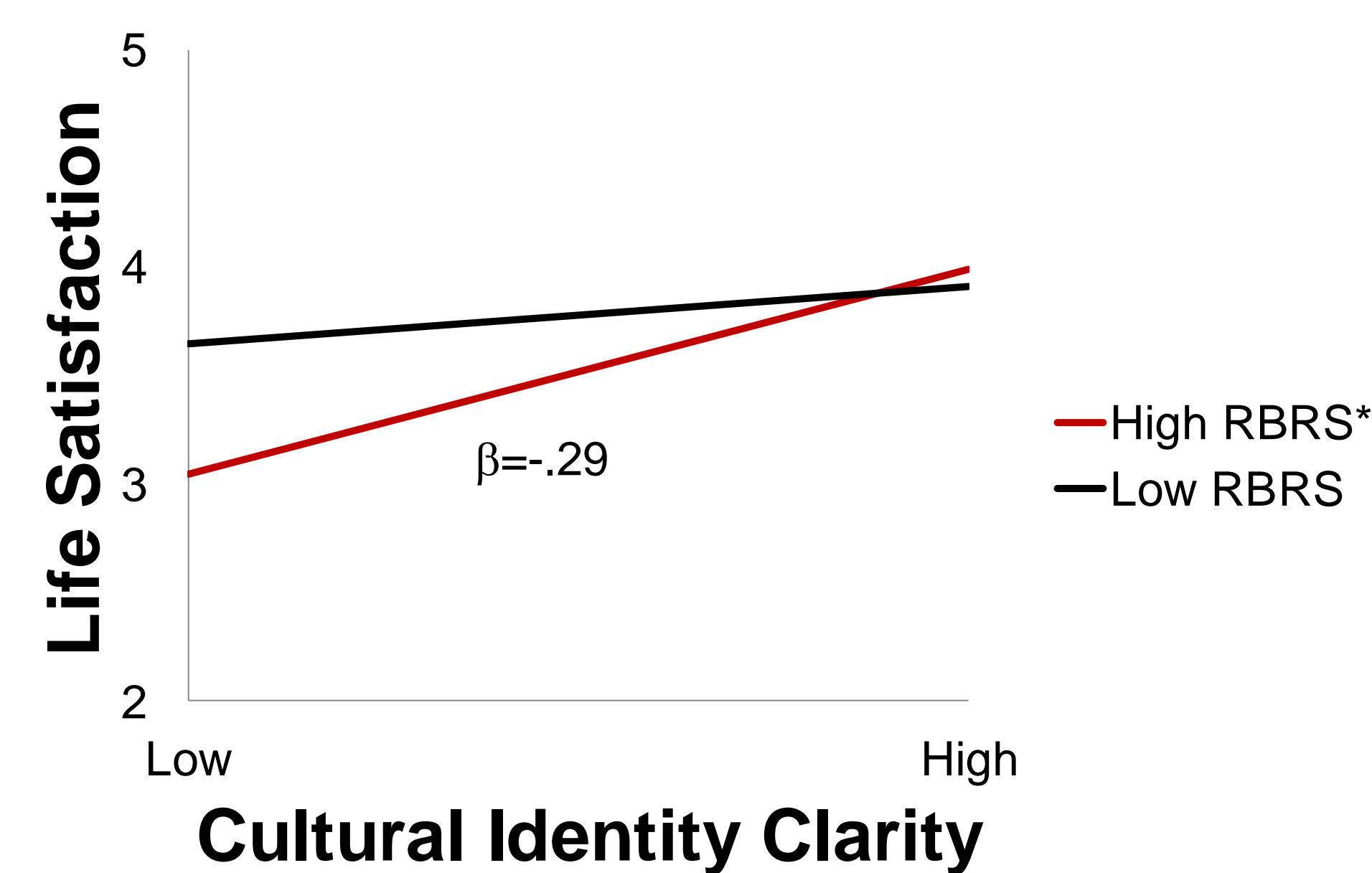


Figure 2. ↑ RBRS \* ↓ CIC = ↓ life satisfaction

High RBRS and low CIC was associated with lower self-esteem,  $p = .001$ .

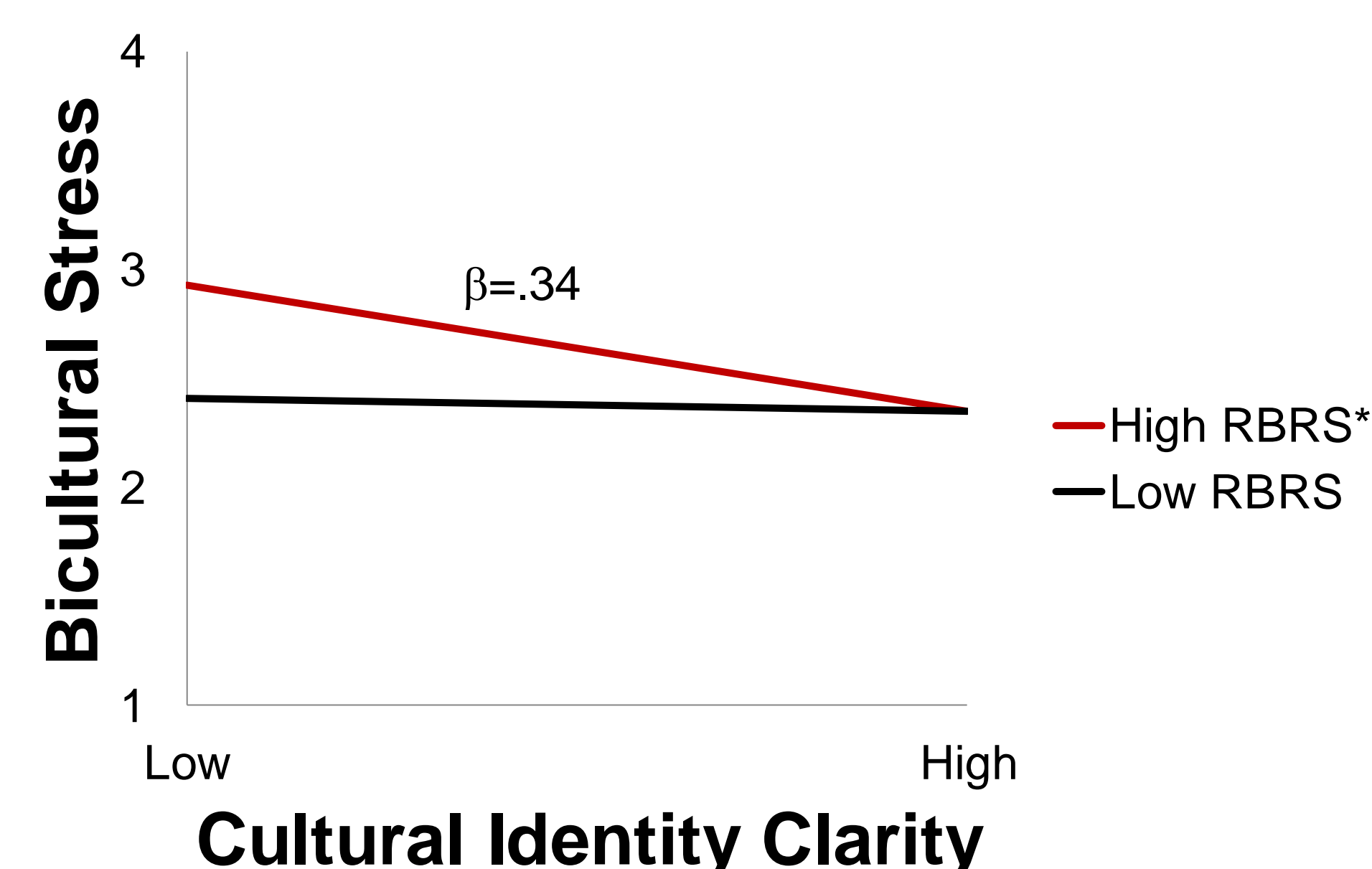


Figure 3. ↑ RBRS \* ↓ CIC = ↑ bicultural stress

High RBRS and low CIC was associated with higher bicultural stress,  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

The results of the present study suggest that when people have lower cultural identity clarity they can be impacted by the negative effects of perceived racial discrimination but as cultural identity clarity increases their well-being is protected. Maintaining cultural identity clarity after immigration is therefore an important contributing factor to the well-being of some immigrant groups.

Interventions to help maintain cultural identity could include developing a clear, shared definition of what it means to be, in the case of the sample in the present study, Latino/a in Canada. This may include engaging in Latino/a traditions and continuing to speak Spanish, as well as participating in Latino/a community affairs in Canada. A second element of such an intervention might be to take part in bicultural competence training following immigration to Canada which would help them be competent in two cultures simultaneously.

## References

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