

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES A THERAPIST CAN USE
WHEN WORKING WITH CULTURAL IDENTITY CONFLICT AMONG SECOND
GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

by

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ABSTRACT

The following paper includes an extensive literature review on identity, conflict, expectations and experiences of second generation South Asian women. The areas explored include: development of identity, the role of culture in identity development, identity conflict, lived experiences, and diverse counseling positions. This research is important because it has the potential to help therapists gain awareness around the struggles with identity conflict that Second Generation South Asian women face. It also allows therapists to develop culturally sensitive ways of working with this population.

Keywords: second-generation, South Asian, diverse, identity, culture

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Chapter One: Understanding Identity Conflict Among Second Generation South Asian Women

Introduction

According to the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011), there are 1,615,925 South Asians in Canada. Out of this population there are many South Asian individuals who migrated from India and have children born in Canada, 229,510 of whom are second generation South Asian women (Statistics Canada, 2011). Second generation includes individuals who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside of Canada. These women will also be referred to as bicultural which is the combining of two cultures, so this will include South Asian and Canadian cultures. Families consisting of multi-generational members that have parents who were born in India and children who were born in Canada struggle with more than basic generational differences. The parents come from a collectivist culture that promotes the better good of the family before an individual, and often have a patriarchal structure. When looking at second generation South Asian women there are certain gender roles that they are expected to abide by, which can increase the generation gap. These issues can be around dating, arranged marriages, and gendered hierarchies (Ai-Lyn Tee, 1996). Identity conflicts can occur when women are expected to retain the cultural beliefs and values that they were raised in, even after marriage, while having an independent identity in order to thrive in the environment they grew up in. The conflict that arises when trying to fit into both of these worlds but not feeling a part of either has the potential to lead to stress, confusion and emotional distress (Sohal, 2009). This research paper will explore possible identity conflicts bicultural South Asian women experience, and will highlight culturally appropriate approaches that therapists can use when working with this group.

Bicultural Identity

The development of identity for a second generation South Asian woman can be influenced by many factors such as social environment and cultural upbringing, which includes values and beliefs that are instilled within her. When looking at the influence of one's social environment, it is common to see individuals adapt their self to their situational context, which has the ability to lead them to living a lifestyle that may not be consistent with their true self. This can occur when one adopts roles, or practices in order to receive approval by another group or people around them. For a second generation South Asian woman living in Canada, this can be seen when one adopts the Canadian culture which may not coincide with the South Asian culture, however it allows them to fit into this environment.

As stated by Shweder et al., (1999) cultural identity “involves taking on worldview beliefs and engaging in behavioural practices that unite people within a community” (as cited in Jensen, 2003, p. 190). For second generation South Asian women, there are two dominant cultures which they are a part of, which include the Eastern and Western cultures. When looking at the Western way of life, there is an emphasis on individual autonomy, whereas the South Asian culture promotes community cohesion and a collective approach. However, one may identify with a traditional culture and incorporate individual autonomy as part of their beliefs if they identified more with it. This can also lead to conflict within an individual if they are unsure of what beliefs to adapt to, or feel compelled or obligated to follow certain practices that are not consistent with who they are.

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Identity conflict

Bicultural South Asian women can find themselves trying to fit into both the Canadian culture, as well as retaining their eastern traditions and values. Since the Eastern and Western culture are quite different, it can be challenging to balance the two. This had the ability to lead to an identity conflict within the individual because they may identify more with one of the cultures, however decide to follow the other one in order to either please others such as family, or to fit into society. South Asian women in the U.S. face extreme familial pressure to create an identity that correlates with the traditional family structure. These can include established gender roles, family obligations and values related to intimate relationships. In a traditional South Asian family dating and premarital sex are shunned upon, whereas in the host culture, there is an acceptance towards dating and premarital relations. There are also contradicting messages in regards to gender roles. As stated by Inman (2006) traditional South Asian women “are expected to be selfless and project legitimacy through cultural involvement, and values that are contradictory to Western notions includes independence and separate identities” (p. 307). Trying to balance these two worlds has the ability to lead to an identity conflict because these women may not be able to understand where they fit or how to juggle the two while living a life that is authentic with whom they are inside.

Self-disclosure

Conducting this research is important to me, because I am a Second Generation South Asian woman who has struggled with an identity conflict. This conflict was created by my struggle to meet cultural expectations, while trying to live a life that was more consistent with whom I am. I was raised in a fairly traditional household where the gender roles were defined,

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dating was not allowed, and the rules were quite strict. Growing up in the western culture while having traditional beliefs created a lot of conflict as to who I was and how I “should” be.

I have often been faced with an internal struggle when trying to make a decision that would be beneficial for me, and promote my individuality, while also trying to cater to my family. I found myself feeling guilty and thought that I was being selfish by putting myself first. This internal battle resulted in feelings consistent with anxiety and depression. I also found it difficult to express this conflict to individuals who were not Second Generation South Asian; because I felt that I would not be understood. I feel that this is a common issue that Second Generation South Asian women and many other women from similar cultures face, and is therefore a much needed area of study for therapists who come from different cultural backgrounds, so that they are better able to understand this issue.

Need for culturally sensitive approaches to counseling

There is an inherent difference in the upbringing of individuals who come from a collectivist culture such as South Asian cultures versus those who come from an individualist cultures such as Canadians. Then there are those individuals who are raised in a collectivist culture while living in a society that promotes individuality. This has the ability to create an internal battle with identity among second generation South Asian women. It is important for these women to address and work through feelings that come up while they are trying to live an authentic life which can be done through the help of a therapist.

As stated by Hays (2001) “culturally responsive practice begins with the therapist’s commitment to a lifelong process of learning about diverse people across cultures and life spans” (p. 61). Ultimately, the therapist’s dedication to becoming more culturally aware leads to a

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deeper understanding of their client and their needs, in addition to a deep appreciation for the richness of their diverse experiences. According to Farrell (2008) in order to embody a diverse counseling posture, counselors must be willing to analyze their own cultural existence and contributions to the therapeutic relationship while being openly receptive to the diversity of their clients (p. 46). Skilled counsellors are sensitive and actively engaged in avoiding discrimination, prejudices, and stereotyping. This improves the chances for successful interactions with not only South Asians but also other non-dominant groups.

Chapter Two: Development of Identity: Second-Generation South Asian Individuals

Introduction

The following paper looks at the formation of identity within different contexts. It begins with the development of identity from a Western perspective. This looks at factors necessary for a healthy identity to be formed. Then it looks at the development of cultural identity and briefly touches on the differences in Eastern versus Western cultures. Following this, there is a look at the development of identity among Second-Generation Asian Indians and discusses their experiences growing up. Lastly, it looks at identity development of Second-Generation South Asian youth in Canada and looks at their lived experiences of the battles of growing up bicultural.

Identity development begins very early on in one's life and continues to evolve throughout their journey. This is illustrated in Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. Also, certain factors play a role in the way one's identity is shaped and develops. According to La Guardia (2009) the key players that influence one early on include parents, family, and teachers. There are also environmental factors that play a role such as socioeconomic status, and what type of environment one grows up in. In addition to this, culture plays a big role in identity development. It has either a negative or positive influence and has the ability to create an identity conflict among bicultural individuals. According to Singh (2009) second generation South Asian individuals are prone to such issues, due to the collision of Eastern and Western cultural influences. However, as stated by Sundar (2008) "second-generation South Asian-Canadian young women are reconceptualising their gender roles in a way that allows them to combine the best qualities of the good South Asian women with mainstream views of what makes a good Canadian woman" (p.260). However, this can lead to many unrealistic expectations of what

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qualities women should possess and can lead to one exploring what resonates with them and can change over time.

Western Identity Development

Origins of Identity Theory

Erik Erikson

When looking at identity, the question that often arises is “who am I?” Erik Erikson created a comprehensive outline of a theory of identity formation for American psychology in the 1950s to the 1970s. Erikson (1963) defined identity as “the ability to experience one’s self as something that has continuity and sameness and to act accordingly” (as cited in Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012, p. 699). In other words, this can be seen as one being their authentic self. In which case, an individual would live a life that coincides with their values, beliefs and as who they see themselves as being in the world. Although authenticity is seen as being an important factor in identity, certain roles shift and identity develops and changes over the course of one’s lifespan.

Erikson identified eight stages of psychosocial identity development. The first four stages focus on the process of identity formation during childhood, whereas the last four look at identity development during adulthood. As stated by Karkouti (2014) the eight stages include basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus diffusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation and ego integrity versus despair. Each of these stages flows into the other as one ages.

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The first stage is basic trust versus mistrust, and this takes place during the first year of life. Trust is developed through a positive interaction with the caregiver and infants learn how to get their needs met through reciprocity. However, if there is interference in the care giving pattern, then a crisis can occur which leads to the infant learning distrust. During the autonomy versus shame and doubt stage, children start exploring their environment and are able to differentiate between themselves and others. According to Karkouti (2014) during this stage “an identity crisis occurs when parents punish their children for not accomplishing expected tasks, e.g. toilet training” (p. 258). When children enter preschool or start interacting with peers, they enter the initiative versus guilt stage in which they begin to differentiate between right and wrong and take responsibility for their decisions. In the industry versus inferiority stage, children start building their own social networks outside the guardian relationship and can develop a sense of inferiority if their performance is not appreciated. These are the primary stages during childhood; however the identity versus identity diffusion stage transitions from childhood to adulthood. During this stage, individuals begin developing their own belief systems, goals, and sense of self and become more independent. There may be confusion when trying to distinguish between who they believe they are versus other’s expectations of who they should be. As stated by Karkouti (2014) “individuals who fail to accommodate both external recognition and self-satisfaction struggle with developing their sense of self, better known as identity diffusion” (p.258).

The intimacy versus isolation stage addresses the establishment of adulthood. If an individual has formed a strong sense of identity, they are able to engage in intimate relationships with others, whereas if they did not create a strong sense of identity, they tend to refrain from making friendships and isolate. According to Karkouti (2014) generativity versus stagnation

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takes place during midlife and it occurs when individuals start giving back to their social system. The focus is on one's professional life and they are concerned with generativity. If one is neglected during this stage, it leads to stagnation and disengagement in productive life activities. The last of the stages includes ego integrity versus despair. This is when a person begins to change their way of thinking because the idea of death arises. During this stage people begin to re-evaluate their lives and reflect on their successes. If they feel that they failed in life, they tend to enter a state of despair and frustration. In order for one to move through the stages, it is important that they successfully complete the prior stage.

Theory in Parenting

Diana Baumrind

According to Diana Baumrind there are three main parenting styles that parents in the Western world take on. This includes authoritarian, permissive and authoritative styles. Each of these styles encompasses its own rules and can be adopted by families of various different cultures.

The authoritarian style is a rather demanding and rigid form of parenting. This parent tries to control the behaviour of a child in relation to a set of standard of conduct. Obedience from a child is valued. There is also the use of forceful measures to restrict self-will when the child's behaviour conflicts with the rules. According to Baumrind (1966) the parent believes in "keeping the child in his place, in restricting his autonomy, and in assigning household responsibilities in order to inculcate respect for work" (p. 890). This parent also does not encourage a verbal give and take with the child and that the child should accept their word for what is right without giving an explanation as to why.

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The permissive parent takes on a role that includes an acceptant and affirmative attitude towards the child's actions. The parent consults with the child regarding decisions and explains the reasons behind certain family rules. As stated by Baumrind (1966) this parent "allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey externally defined standards" (p. 889). This type of parenting places a great deal of autonomy on the child as they create their own rules or figure out what works for them.

The authoritative parenting style includes parents who do present themselves as authority figures and who have rules and expect their children to abide by them, but also allow and encourage verbal give and take with the child and explain reasons behind certain rules. This parent values autonomy from the child, as well as disciplined conformity from them. This can be seen as a combination of both the authoritative and permissive styles.

Parents that come from a collectivist culture tend to adopt the authoritarian style of parenting. There are strict rules and children, especially girls are expected to abide by these rules in an effort to not put shame on the family and to uphold their reputation within the community. These parents do not give reasons for why there are certain rules but enforce them and do not engage in verbal give and take with their children.

Identity Formation

Identity development begins early in life. At a young age, children are able to learn what they are interested in, where their strengths lie and how they fit into the environment around them. Their roles within the family unit are also shaped to some degree in regards to their experiences and expectations set forth by their family. Certain roles one can take on can include

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being a daughter, granddaughter, or a sister. This illustrates the various roles an individual may take on depending on the dynamics of the relationship to another. According to La Guardia (2009) everyone also has different levels of competencies, and activities they are good at which can also contribute to the development of identity which can include certain sports, or talents. In order to further these abilities, there needs to be opportunities available in regards to resources being available and social support to explore one's abilities. During adolescence, there is more of an emphasis on one's competencies as being aligned with their identity. In addition to this, more roles are created which can include being a student, a friend, and a boyfriend or girlfriend, which has the ability to shift one's view of who they are. Moving into adulthood, individuals generally tend to know what their beliefs are, what they value, the roles they have in society and according to (Ryan & Deci, 2003) "how well people negotiate these tasks has a direct and deep impact on their sense of worth and personal- well-being" (as cited in La Guardia, 2009, p. 90). This shows that it is important that one's authentic self-aligns with who they portray themselves to be in society.

Self-Determination Theory

La Guardia (2009) explores the need of fulfilment through the use of the self-determination theory. According to this theory, every individual has three basic psychological needs which lead to development; this includes autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy explores behaviours that are self-initiated and free. In situations where autonomy is not present, an individual may feel that their behaviour is influenced by others. Competence refers to challenging oneself and being successful in mastering what one has set out to accomplish mostly for the purpose of broadening one's capacity. Relatedness on the other hand

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focuses on feelings around belonging and meeting the need to be seen as significant in others' lives. As stated by La Guardia (2009) "relatedness refers to connecting to the person for who they are essentially and does not embody connections for the outcomes of a person's behaviour, their appearance or status, or their possessions" (p.92). In other words, it is connecting to another's authentic self. It is within these psychological needs that identities are developed or adopted.

Authenticity

La Guardia (2009) "distinguished between true and false self, suggesting that when acting from the true self, people feel real and in touch with their core needs and emotions, whereas acting from a false-self signals a split between one's outer presentation and one's deeper feelings and needs" (p. 97). This illustrates the importance of authenticity for living a life that is consistent with one's core emotions and needs. In order to live an authentic life, it is important to explore "one's core motivations, open and unbiased processing of associated thoughts and feelings, and behaviour in accord with these associated thoughts and feelings, all in the service of creating connections with others from these experiences" (p. 97). When an individual is able to learn this, they have the ability to start living a more authentic life. This also creates space for individuals to connect with others on a deep level and plays a big role in one's identity.

Social Environment

Another important factor that plays a role in identity formation or development is one's social environment. It is common that individuals adapt their self to their situational context; however this has the ability to lead to them living a lifestyle that is not consistent with their true self. This can take place when an individual adopts roles, or practices in order to receive approval by another group or people around them. This may not be something that interests them or they value, however they engage in it to please others. As stated by La Guardia, this takes place "to the extent that a given identity is adopted and maintained for these purposes, negative consequences on functioning are predicted" (p.98). This can take place with children in situations where parents use conditional regard in an effort to control the child's behaviour. This however creates inauthentic behaviour and does not enforce autonomy. Children engage in these behaviours because they feel compelled to do so, and any experience of failure to meet their parent's expectations can lead to feelings of guilt and shame. As mentioned by La Guardia (2009) "having to give up one's autonomy to gain relatedness to parents can be quite costly to healthy engagement in a variety of identity-related activities" (p. 98).

According to La Guardia (2009) in order for healthy identity development to take place, it is essential to explore "one's potentials and integration of experiences into a committed set of personally defining and meaningful values, goals, and roles" (p.101). It is also important to implement autonomy at a young age so a child is able to figure out what their interests are. In addition to this, it is important to promote an environment that supports optimal identity formation. Authenticity is one of the most important aspects of identity in achieving a life that is consistent with one's true inner self as well as their outer self.

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Ecological System Theory

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994) the ecological systems theory looks at how different environments throughout one's lifespan influence their behaviour. These systems consist of the micro system, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro system and the chronosystem. Exploring these systems better helps one understand a person and how different environmental systems impact their behaviour and who they are.

As stated by Bronfenbrenner (1994) "a microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment" (p. 39). In other words, this describes the direct environment one is exposed to in which we contribute to and take experiences from. The mesosystem looks at the relationships within one's microsystems and the links between the two systems such as one's home system and school system. It is therefore a system of microsystems. The exosystem as stated by Bronfenbrenner (1994) "comprises the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives" (p. 40). For example, this can include the relationship between a home and the parent's workplace. The macrosystem looks at the culture of an individual which encompasses their socioeconomic status, ethnicity and race and how this impacts the individual. Lastly, the chronosystem looks at the changes and transitions in one's lifespan and how it impacts them. These systems all influence and impact one's behaviour and who they are.

Cultural Identity Theory

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As stated by Shweder et al., (1999) cultural identity “involves taking on worldview beliefs and engaging in behavioural practices that unite people within a community” (as cited in Jensen, 2003, p. 190). One’s worldview is shaped by their beliefs of the world, as well as their moral and religious beliefs. This includes practices that are passed down from generation to generation such as ways of dressing or customs associated with marriage. This may also be practiced within the individual’s current family. As stated by Jensen (2003) “cultural identity formation also in some respects intersects with the formation of identity in spheres such as religion and morality” (p.190). These beliefs in turn allow individuals to understand their cultural identity. When one forms a cultural identity, they adapt aspects of the culture they identify with and do not necessarily have to abide by all of the cultural values and beliefs of a specific culture. Social identity is much like cultural identity, which stated by Feitosa and Salas (2012) refers to “how individuals define themselves based on group membership” (p.529). In a society that consists of many different cultural communities and groups, one may develop a cultural or social identity based on several different beliefs and practices. When looking at the Western way of life, there is an emphasis on individual autonomy, whereas more traditional cultures promote community cohesion and a collective approach. However, one may identify with a traditional culture and incorporate individual autonomy as part of their beliefs if they identified more with it. This can also lead to conflict within an individual if they are unsure of what beliefs to adapt to, or feel compelled or obligated to follow certain practices that are not consistent with who they are.

South Asian Youth

Second generation South Asian individuals are children of parents who have immigrated to Canada from another country. According to Lalonde and Giguère (2008) “bicultural individuals have psychological access to two sets of cultural norms that may be tied to geography, ethnicity and/or religion” (p.58). When looking at Second generation South Asian individuals, according to Singh (2009) there are three dichotomies that differentiate Eastern cultures from Western cultures, which include individualism vs. collectivism, traditional vs. modern and high context vs. low context. The Western perspective promotes a modern, individualistic, high context culture. It emphasizes independence and self-reliance, and there is a focus on being goal oriented. Also, it focuses on uniqueness of different identities and heterogeneity. The Eastern perspective on the other hand focuses on a collective approach where individuals are given a role in order to meet the group needs. According to Singh (2009) there is also an emphasis on familial dynamics, relationships, implicit and assumed interactions. The low context dynamic focuses on homogeneity and covert communication. There are clear and marked differences in the two cultures, which can be a challenge for second-generation South Asian women.

Bicultural Identity Theory

Identity Formation of Second-Generation Asian Indian Americans

Iwamoto, Negi, Partiali, and Creswell (2013) conducted a study on twelve second-generation Indian Americans. This consisted of six men and six women from the San Francisco Bay area and southern California. Half of the group’s parents grew up in Southern India, and the other half were from northern or other regions of India. The purpose of this study was to gain

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knowledge on how these individuals interpreted, processed and experienced ethnic identity development. The results were organized into different phases on one's life which include childhood, early adolescence, adolescence, emerging adulthood, and early adulthood.

As stated by Iwamoto et al., (2013) "during childhood, participants' social group was identified as the dominant/majority racial or ethnic group in their community" (p.230). In this case, those who grew up in an all-White community tended to identify with that group. This led to a disconnection between their ethnic groups; however they may have still internalized the core values of their ethnic group. At this age, it was difficult for the participants to engage and connect with other Asian Indians because they did not feel like they could relate to them. In terms of self-concept, many of the participants did have a realization that they were both physically and culturally different from Whites. However, they felt the need to hide their cultural self as a means to fit in with their peers. As stated by one of the participants in Iwamoto et al., (2013) "I had to give up a lot of my Indian-ness, because just to, like, interact, and be part of mainstream America, be accepted by my peers, I had to be American; I had to dress American... I even lightened my hair... I tried very, very hard to be White." (p. 233). This shows a loss of cultural identity in an effort to be accepted by society; however it has the ability to create conflicted feelings of one's identity internally. In addition to this, these participants also reported experiencing overt racism and feeling alienated due to their peers not understanding or accepting Asian Indian culture.

When looking at early adolescence the participants tended to gravitate towards their peers as a primary means of socialization while resisting their parents' cultural practices. This led to minimal involvement in social or cultural functions because they were trying to separate themselves from the culture. This also led to conflict between the participants and their parents

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because they wanted their children to take more of an active role in their community events. They also worried about looking a certain way so that they would fit in. Female participants recalled worrying about the texture of their hair, as well as the color of their skin, while the males focused on trying to be “cool” and fitting in by doing well in sports. One of the female participants mentioned dying her hair light in an effort to look like her peers and then having the realization that she was never going to be White. On the other end, many of these participants had stereotypes about other Asian Indians and looked at them as being nerds and wanting to grow up to be doctors. In an effort to be different from this group, they did not try as hard in school and focused more on their role within social activities.

During adolescence participants connected with individuals with shared values from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and began connecting with other Asian Indians. There was a shift in their perception of Asian Indians as there was a realization that they had more similar values and experiences than that had previously thought. During this period, they were able to deconstruct their misconceptions about their culture. They also became more comfortable with the culture and began wearing traditional attire and becoming more involved with their cultural community.

Emerging into adulthood, participants reported being able to develop deep, meaningful relationships with other Asian Indian Americans. They realized that they had similar values, beliefs and experiences as they had. This was also a place where they were able to embrace their ethnic pride.

As stated by a participant in Iwamoto et al., (2013):

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College was where I was really comfortable with my Indian-ness. In fact, it was a gradual thing. When I came to college, there were tons of Indians and I started becoming friends with a lot of them... I think by me hanging out with them and me relating to them, I started realizing my culture was important and started becoming involved in it. (p. 235)

However, for many of the participants this was also a time where they became aware of structural racism after the 9/11 attack, they reported being looked at funny or with suspicion.

During early adulthood the participants began to primarily socialize with other Asian Indian Americans. They were able to relate to them because of shared values, and experiences growing up such as racism and similar family issues. Another factor that created that bond was their appreciation for their parents. At this time, they also began to value their parent's behaviours by hosting cultural events. They were also able to gain more insight into their culture by asking their parents more about it, and researching on their ethnic heritage and religion. Hindi movies were commonly used by Indian parents to teach their children lessons in behaviour.

As stated in Warikoo (2005) one of the participants stated:

[One movie] was about family ties, and how the girl was really close to her parents, and then she made her parents ashamed and then tried to climb back up to that ladder to be with her parents. So, I watched that with my parents, and my parents were like, so you see how close families are? You see how this is? I'm like, Yes mom, yes dad. (p. 817)

It was during this time that participants began feeling comfortable with their cultural self and were able to navigate through their multiple identities. They were also able to solidify their core values which included the importance of family, education and religion. However, there were

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also challenges that they were encountered with, such as not knowing what cultural values to instill in the third generation. One participant in Iwamoto et al., (2013) stated “When you have kids you want them to have the good but you don’t want them to have the bad, you want them to see the truth but not the falseness and so that is what you want to balance them with” (p. 236). This illustrates the conflict with which aspects of the multiple identities these individuals find most important to pass onto their children.

As stated by Iwamoto et al., (2013) “this is one of the first studies, to our knowledge, to explore the racial and ethnic identity development process among second-generation AIAs” (p.236). Through this analysis they were able to create an ethnic identity development model for Asian Indian Americans. This looks at key turning points and developmental transitions that are important in identity development among Asian Indian Americans. “The overall essence of the participants’ experiences illustrates that racial and ethnic identity development is an ongoing and lifelong process, with the participants becoming more aware and building upon their racial and ethnic identity year by year” (Iwamoto, et al., 2013, p. 236).

Identity Development among Second-Generation South Asian Canadian youth

According to Lu (2001) bicultural-identity emerges when youth maintain ties to a culture of origin, while simultaneously adhering to the norms of the majority culture” (as cited in Sundar, 2008, p.255). This identity is seen as being fluid and works to bridge the two worlds the individual may be a part of. There is a possibility that the youth could find themselves with a conflicted sense of who they are or which world they identify more with or they could have a strong bi-cultural identity. Sundar (2008) used the term bi-cultural competence to describe the youth that are able to successfully integrate aspects of the mainstream society and the culture of

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their origin. Sundar (2008) conducted a study on 26 second-generation South Asian Canadians between the ages of 18-25 living in a major Canadian city. There were fifteen females and eleven males. The goal was to explore the ways these individuals viewed themselves in an environment that consisted of two different cultures. These cultures included mainstream Canadian culture which was outside of their home and their South Asian culture which was inside the home.

The findings of this study indicated that the youth referenced three main dimensions, which included race, gender and nationality. When looking at race, many of the participants referred to being “brown”. The terms brown and South Asian were interchangeably used to describe people of various religious backgrounds. They described race as being a primary identifier because it was one of the first things people noticed.

When discussing the color of their skin, one of the participants in Sundar (2008) stated:

It’s something I just don’t remember. I feel like I’m kind of South Asian in name more than anything. Maybe living with that has almost affected me more than actually being a minority... is being seen as a minority... It is strange to be perceived as one thing when you don’t even really... I mean, maybe it’s 5th on my list of things you know? It just constantly surprises me that it’s the first thing people see. (p.259)

This goes to show that even if one does not identify as being “brown” it is something that is evident and therefore is used by others to identify these youth. This leads to these youth thinking of themselves in terms of race because they know that it is what others notice.

When looking at gender, the participants discussed it as being critical in shaping the way they see themselves. Sundar (2008) explored challenges women face when trying to negotiate the

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differences between their “white” and “South Asian” gender roles, and the fact that it does not necessarily have to create a conflict.

As stated in Sundar (2008) one of the participants discussed her views of a collision of cultures when she stated:

I think that (South Asian) women are definitely viewed differently now than when my mom was my age... There are a lot more opportunities, (we) don't have to fight as hard to be taken seriously... We think a lot differently than... my mom's generation... We're more independent in thought, I think. We're trying to push boundaries; we're not as accepting of what we're told... We have our own opinions... I'd say we have very high goals and expectations for ourselves and we have a different concept of what's right and wrong. (For example), in relationships... (In) my mom's generation, when she was my age, it would be looked down upon if a woman were to be dating or just basically spending time alone with people of the opposite gender. And I think these days, South Asian women are more likely to do things like that... Dating has always been a norm among North Americans, but it is relatively new to South Asians being accepting of people dating. It's a phenomenon that's been happening over I'd say the past 10-15 years.

(p.260)

Second generation South Asian women are now reconceptualising their gender roles in a way that allows them to take the qualities from both cultures and combine them. According to Sundar (2008) this could include taking qualities from South Asian women such as being caring, maternal, family-oriented and then the ones from mainstream society which could include

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strength, education and power. However, this can also lead to many expectations and a culture clash which has the potential to lead to identity conflict.

National Identification was also important to youths' identities. Since these participants are both Canadian and South Asian, it is common that they compound or hyphenate the two. The way that the participants are able to see themselves in the world is dependent on their surroundings and who they feel that they connect or relate to. This is something that can also change if the youth is travelling and visiting abroad.

As stated in Sundar (2008) by one of the participants:

When I go somewhere else from here (in Canada), I don't think about going to India or going wherever... I always think I want to go back to Canada, because this is my home. But at the same time, I'm not Canadian when I'm here. When I'm here, when you say "Canadian" usually you're talking about... White people, and here I'm brown. If people ask me here, "What are you?" I'll be like "I'm strange... When I'm here, it's weird... I would never say I'm just Canadian. I'd say I'm Indian-Canadian or South Asian-Canadian... The hyphen is always there. When I'm somewhere else I'm just Canadian. (p. 262)

The way youth identify is based on how different they feel from the majority population. In Canada, they are visibly different and therefore they are more likely to identify with being South Asian as their "brown-ness" sets them apart from other White Canadians. Whereas, when they are visiting India, their cultural differences set them apart from others despite their commonalities in race and therefore they identify more with being Canadian. However, according to Sundar (2008) for second-generation South Asian-Canadian youth, feelings of

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belonging and feeling alienated occur simultaneously and using the hyphenated term may be used as an attempt to resolve the contradiction between being South Asian at times and Canadian at other times.

Identity tends to be created and recreated over the course of one's life which can be changed due to different situations and experiences. Individuals can change as their personal interests shift, and they have evolving relationships with other members of their cultural group. At a young age individuals may not have as much exposure to their culture if they grow up in communities that consist of members of a different ethnic group. However, as individuals transition into university, there is more exposure to individuals from similar ethnic groups which allows an opportunity to build new relationships.

According to Yon (2000) "the ability to move between different sites of identity is particularly important for ethno-racially diverse youth who often face pressures barriers, and discrimination related to their ethnic/racial makeup (as cited in Sundar, 2008, p.265). These youth are able to deal with these challenges by moving back and forth from engaging in behaviours that are either more South Asian or Canadian. According to Sundar (2008) youth "assess each situation, decide which identity will help them to achieve the desired outcome, and execute the identity that is most useful in reaching this goal" (p.265).

There are situations in which youth "brown it up" in order to achieve a goal which can be described by a youth in Sundar (2008):

I (use my South Asian connections) all the time... You have someone who wants something, and you know with your Indian-ness, you can get that thing. (An example) is when (our group) was having an event, like a Cards Night or a Movie

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Night or something... We didn't have a lot of money to do it, so we were asking for sponsors. We went to the Walmart, to Zellers... and nobody could help us out. But as soon as we went to the Indian community and we were like "Auntie, Uncle, can you help us with this and that," they were more than willing to give it to (us). They were just willing to donate it to (us)... That's how I use my Indian-ness to my advantage... through the networks. (p.266)

Alternatively, youth also discussed situations in which they were required to "bring down the brown". This would be in cases where they would be trying to fit in with their mainstream peers in order to avoid social exclusion. According to a participant in Sundar (2008) a time of bringing down the brown included "When I'm at a conference with all pishy-poshy people, then I'm like back straight, I'm very articulate, I watch what I'm saying... And that's like when I bring (my brown-ness) down... You want to make yourself sound as (Canadian) as possible at these (events)" (p.266). This is another example of an individual having multiple identities and choosing which identity to portray to others depending on the context of the situation.

Conclusion

There are many factors that play a role in the identity development of Second generation South Asian individuals. There are Eastern and Western cultural influences that contribute to one's way of life. These cultures are on the opposite end of the spectrum and this can make it difficult for individuals to find a balance of what works for them. It can also be a challenge to form an identity based on opposing values or beliefs. Authenticity is an important aspect of healthy identity formation and therefore it is important for an individual's outer world to match their inner world. However, identity is fluid and can change over the course of one's life and

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therefore being self-aware is important when doing self-work. The question “who am I?” is something one can continue to ask themselves throughout their life and get different answers to depending on their experiences and stage of life they are in.

Chapter Three: Cultural Conflict among Second Generation South Asian Individuals

Introduction

The following paper looks at the lives of second generation South Asian individuals. There is an exploration into the collision of two cultures and living in a bicultural world. The acculturation process is looked at, and the role that it plays in conflict within bicultural individuals. There is also a look into the types of conflicts that can arise for second generation South Asian individuals, which includes: ethno-cultural identity conflict, cultural value conflict, identity conflict and intergenerational conflict.

Being bicultural in a western society can be either a rich experience or one that causes many obstacles and conflicts. For many second Generation South Asian individuals, it can be a challenging task to juggle between two sets of values that are on the opposite end of the spectrum which include the Eastern and Western values. One's acculturation level also has the ability to determine how one fits into a world that has values that are different from their ethnic culture. This then has the ability to lead to ethno-cultural identity conflict within an individual. In addition to this, depending on the level of acculturation within a family, or one's beliefs about their ethnic culture versus that of the host culture, there is the potential for intergenerational conflict to take place. In order to cope with such issues, it is important for second generation South Asian individuals and those working with them to understand the conflicts that arise for them.

Collision of Two Cultures

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According to Lalonde and Giguère (2008) “second generation youth in Canada are the children of parents who immigrated to Canada from another country” (p. 58). Although these second generation individuals come from diverse backgrounds, they have being bicultural in common. These individuals then have two sets of cultural norms that they abide by, which include that of their heritage culture and that of the host culture. The norms of their heritage culture are typically taught to them through their parents, extended family and their ethnic community. Whereas, the host culture is learned from school, media and the larger society in which they reside. An example of this can include someone who was born and raised in Western society but has a family who comes from an Eastern culture. When looking at second generation South Asian youth, Das and Kemp (1997) stated:

Children of South-Asian immigrants are socialized into two cultures, the culture of the family and the culture of the larger American society. Most parents try to inculcate ethnic pride and awareness of their cultural heritage in their children. For young school age children, this sometimes poses a problem. They stand out because of their physical appearance and for that reason are often teased or rejected by other children. Most young children lack the inner resources to deal with such hostility and to base their self-esteem on their ethnic heritage. They want to be like everyone else so they can fit in with the crowd and shed any cultural trait that sets them apart. Ethnic pride and cultural awareness come with intellectual maturity and strong familiar support. (p. 28-29)

For many second generation South Asian youth, it is difficult to establish a role that aligns with values from both of the cultures they are immersed in. As stated by Maisuria (2011) this can result in the individual doing one of three things which includes: “the individual will identify with one culture and totally reject the other culture, the individual will be able to accept

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and identify with both cultures and establish an integrated and well-balanced identity or the individual will have a conflicted identity status in which he/she will not be able to choose with which culture to identify” (p. 5.). This shows that it can either be an easy process or a trying one in which one is left conflicted.

Cultural Conflict

According to Lalonde and Giguère (2008) for second generation individuals “cultural conflict is likely to occur when heritage and Canadian norms offer incompatible behavioural prescriptions” (p. 58). Such can take place at any time during the life of a second generation individual. There are different types of conflict that can take place as a result of cultural conflict which includes intergroup conflict, interpersonal conflict and intrapersonal conflict. Intergroup conflict can take place when an individual faces discrimination because they do not seem to fit in on the basis of their skin color, accent, or the way they dress. Interpersonal conflicts on the other hand involve individual’s parents or peers, whereas intrapersonal conflict is something that is experienced by the individual and can result in the individuals feeling trapped between two cultures.

As stated by Lalonde and Giguère (2008)

A conflict between the two sets of cultural norms of the bicultural individual is more likely to be evidenced when the two cultural identities of bicultural individuals are simultaneously salient to the individual, when these identities evoke two sets of norms that are incompatible and when the individual feels some commitment to each set of norms. (p.58)

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It can be challenging for these individuals to balance the two sets of cultural norms that are different but important to them.

Acculturation

According to (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002) acculturation looks at “how ethnic minority individuals adapt to the dominant culture and the associated changes in their beliefs, values, and behaviour that result from contact with the new culture and its members” (p.338). The model of acculturation suggested by Berry (1990, 2005a; Berry, Kim & Boski, 1988) suggests that “immigrants learn to relate to their host cultures in four different ways: (a) they may assimilate and identify solely with the host culture; (b) they may marginalize themselves from both their ancestral and host culture; (c) they may separate and identify solely with other immigrants from their ancestral culture and reject the host culture, or (d) they may selectively integrate elements of their ancestral and host cultures”(as cited in Banjerjee-Stevens, 2009, p.16). According to Farver et al., (2002) integration is seen as creating the least amount of stress because it is the most psychologically adaptive pattern. Therefore, the individuals who integrate experience fewer psychological problems than those who are marginalized, separated, or assimilated. According to Robinson (2005) “studies of young Asian people have shown that most young people prefer the integration mode of adaptation” (p.186). Therefore, a majority of the sample of Asian people in the study are bicultural and bilingual. They kept aspects of their ancestral culture, while adapting to cultural norms of the host culture. This can lead to self-identification being hyphenated, in this case these young people identified as being Indo-English. In addition to this Sundar (2008) stated “the process of acculturation demands important adjustments that have a permanent impact on a person’s identity” (p. 254).

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As stated by Robinson (2005) some immigrants that feel that they are viewed negatively by others tend to view the host culture in a negative light and reject it. In turn, the level of acculturation of parents has been seen to influence their children's acculturation level. As stated by Farver, et al. (2002) it has been shown that "adolescents whose immigrant parents did not adapt to the host culture had more psychological problems than did adolescents whose parents were integrated or assimilated" (p.339). These adolescents also tended to be marginalized from the host culture. The larger the difference between the host culture and one's ancestral culture, the higher the levels of stress among individuals. An example of a difference between the South Asian versus the western culture can include values and beliefs around dating. In a western society, dating is acceptable. Whereas, in the South Asian culture, according to Robinson (2005) "intergenerational conflicts involving dating affect girls more than boys because most parents tend to put more restrictions on their daughters than on their sons and traditionally girls are thought to carry the honour of the family" (p.187). Having two opposing values can create stress among bicultural South Asian women who may want to follow their family values but at the same time want to fit into the host society. According to Banjerjee-Stevens (2009) "stress associated with the acculturation process for second-generation South Asian women in a pluralistic culture can lead to feelings of isolation, defensiveness, and feelings of inferiority" (p.4). A major issue bicultural second generation individuals tend to face is the conflict between maintaining their ethnic distinctiveness and connecting with individuals from the dominant culture.

According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001) there are three types of intergenerational patterns of acculturation among second generation individuals (as cited in Farver et al., 2002, p.24). This includes dissonant acculturation, consonant acculturation and selective acculturation. Dissonant

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acculturation takes place when a child becomes a master with the host culture and language and loses their ancestral culture and the parent relies on them for help understanding the host culture. This is common among second generation children who grow up in the host school system and learn how to speak and write English and have parents who may have rejected the host culture but need assistance navigating the norms of the host culture. Consonant acculturation is what takes place when one simultaneously learns the host culture and let's go of the ancestral culture across generations. This is likely to take place when parent's education level and skills match their children's. The third pattern described by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) is selective acculturation "in which learning the new culture's language and values is modulated and slowed down by a co-ethnic community that allows for partial retention of the ancestral language and norms" (as cited in Farver et al., 2002, p.25). According to findings by Farver et al., (2002) selective acculturation was more likely to produce second generation immigrants who are fluently bilingual, have higher self-esteem and have the ability to achieve higher educational and occupational goals. Also, as stated by Farver et al., (2002)

Children who learn the language and culture of their new country without losing those of the old have a much better understanding of their place in the world. They need not clash with their parents as often or feel embarrassed by them because they are able to bridge the gap across generations and value their elders' traditions and goals. (p.25-26)

Predicting Ethno-Cultural Identity Conflict

According to Stuart and Ward (2011) "the process of cultural transition following immigration can present quite a dilemma, as individuals who previously only identified with their ethnic culture may have to take on new and different elements of the host culture" (p.117).

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This then has the potential to create an identity conflict, especially among younger immigrants because they may have been in the process of developing a cultural identity and are now being raised in a different community with a different set of rules and values. This may create the need within the individuals to fit into both worlds. As stated by Stuart and Ward (2011) there are three contextual influences that make the biggest impact on young people, which include family, interpersonal relationships and group belonging. There are also certain domains that are related to these influences which include interpersonal attachment to close others, family conflict and cohesion, and ethnic and national identity.

Attachment or how individuals relate to close others is important to consider when looking at what forces shape ones values and behaviours. The attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1969) is used to describe how children relate to their caregivers “although it has also been shown that early attachment to parents informs the style in which individuals will attach to close others in adulthood” (as cited in Stuart and Ward, 2011, p. 118). This early developed style of relating to others affects how an individual approaches unknown situations and also how well they will adjust to the situation.

When immigrants come into a new country, or environment they are faced with an unknown situation in an unfamiliar environment and therefore their attachment style does influence their adjustment. In addition to this, Stuart and Ward (2011) found that “immigrants’ attachment styles are related to the following acculturation strategies: dismissive and fearful attachment are linked to separation, secure attachment is associated with integration, and preoccupied attachment is related to both separation and marginalization” (p.118). This shows that lack of trust in others has the ability to lead to disengagement from the host culture.

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Also, a study conducted by Handojo (2000) on Asian immigrants found that “people with a preoccupied attachment style relate less easily to the new culture than to their culture of origin, and that those with a dismissive attachment style relate more easily to the new culture than to their own (as cited in Stuart and Ward, 2011, p. 118). Therefore, it is believed that those who have a secure attachment style may have a lower level of ethno-cultural identity conflict because they are able to handle situations of conflict with greater ease than those from other attachment styles. The study discussed in Stuart and Ward (2011) found that individuals with preoccupied attachment styles saw themselves as not worthy of love while believing others are trustworthy. In addition to this, Oudenhoven and Hofstra (2006) found that “individuals with preoccupied attachment styles are ambivalent about their relationships to both the ethnic and host national group; although they strive for social inclusion, they do not easily feel accepted” (as cited in Stuart and Ward, 2011, p. 125). This perception of being excluded from one’s group while seeing that group as being important has to ability to create ethno-cultural identity conflict.

When a family migrates to a new country they are faced with many new challenges. One of these challenges includes adjusting to a new culture, and environment that may be quite different from their own culture. Parents who come with young children also face the struggle of trying to keep the values from their culture instilled in their children while allowing them to adapt to their new environment. As stated by Stuart and Ward (2011) for South Asian immigrations

The family has a particularly important influence on adaptation. International research indicated that South Asian families live in extended families, preserve traditional gender roles, demand obedience to elders, retain collectivist values, and encourage a high level of familial interdependence many years after immigration. These values and practices

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may provide a supportive, relational environment; however, if traditional ways are seen to be incompatible with host culture norms by young people striving to negotiate two cultures, there is an increased risk of ethno-cultural identity conflict. (p. 125)

There is also a chance for dissonant acculturation to take place when a family moves to a new country and the children adapt to the host culture faster than the parents. In this case, there is a chance that intergenerational conflict between immigrant children and their parents will increase. If the values of the host culture and the culture of the family are quite different, there is a chance that it will be harmful to the development of self-worth in immigrant youth. According to Stuart and Ward (2011) intergenerational conflict can be seen as exacerbating ethno-cultural identity conflict while “increased family cohesion and the perception of congruence between one’s behaviours and beliefs and those of family members act as protectors against ethno-cultural identity conflict” (p. 119). Overall, it was found that intergenerational conflict and family cohesion did significantly affect the level of identity conflict experienced by immigrant youth.

There are certain factors that play a role in the development of ethno-cultural identity conflict. Attachment style and the influence of family are two of the biggest predictors of whether an individual will face this conflict. Therefore, it is important to explore an individual’s attachment style when beginning to understand why they may be experiencing an identity conflict. In addition to this, exploring the role of family and expectations, as well as the values of the familiar culture can assist in predicting whether one will encounter ethno-cultural identity conflict.

Cultural Value Conflict

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As stated by Inman (2006) “in an attempt to actively reproduce the traditional culture, South Asian families emphasize an internal and an external ethnic identity” (p. 308). An internal ethnic identity is created through an internalized self-image that instills a sense of group obligation and belonging within the ethnic group, whereas the external ethnic identity focuses on observable social behaviours such as participating in ethnic functions. These are followed differently by first and second generation women. Second generation women experience the culture through participating in cultural events. These women are also closely monitored by the family due to fears of them becoming too “Americanized” which can create a significant amount of stress for these women. Whereas, first generation women are grown up immersed in the culture and the practices and they experience the pressure of maintaining their internal ethnic image. As stated by Inman (2006) “for fear of ethnic isolation, these women may struggle with moral cultural obligations related to dating and premarital relations” (p. 308). Also, Maisuria (2008) found that cultural value conflict is greater for Asian Indian women than for Asian Indian men as stated:

Individuals living within a bicultural context typically have to contend with and negotiate two cultural value set. According to Marin (1982), cultural values are a significant and ingrained part of one’s self-definition and typically are the last level to be influenced. Asian-Indian women living within a bicultural context have to integrate and balance potentially disparate cultural values and behavioural expectations. Berry (1993), suggested that inconsistencies between acculturation options can create much stress for individuals acculturating within two distinct cultures. Asian-Indian women are likely to struggle in their attempt to maintain their cultural identity while absorbing aspects of the new culture. These women may potentially experience a challenge in their choices to

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retain or change their own cultural paradigms. Needing to maintain allegiance to their own culture and being entrenched within the traditional values has implications for Asian-Indian women who are making a transition into Western society. (as cited in Maisuria, 2008, p. 28).

Inman (2006) conducted a study on 193 South Asian women in the United States. 63 of these women were first generation and 130 were second generation. The ages ranged from 20 to 60 years of age for the first generation women and 18 to 37 for the second generation women. They were assessed using the cultural value conflict scale, person of color racial identity scale, and a scale used to measure internal and external ethnic identity. The goal was to “investigate the effects of education, level of religiosity, ethnic identity (internal and external), and racial identity statuses (conformity, dissonance, resistance, and awareness) on cultural value conflict for first and second generation South Asian women” (p. 306). In addition to this, cultural value conflict was explored in two areas which included intimate relations and sex-role expectations. The results indicated that religiosity was the highest predictor of intimate relations conflict among second generation women. For first generation women, it was found that stronger internal ethnic identification would create greater intimate relations conflict.

Identity Conflict among South Asian Women

Bicultural South Asian women living in the western world can find themselves navigating through multiple social systems and within that they are able to develop an ethnic identity. It is important to be seen and be a part of both the host culture and their culture of origin and therefore has the ability to create an identity conflict. According to Inman (2006) cultural value conflict is defined as an experience of “negative affect resulting from dealing

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simultaneously with values and expectations internalized from the culture of origin and those imposed from the new culture” (p. 307). South Asian women in the U.S. face extreme familial pressure to create an identity that correlates with the traditional family structure. These can include established gender roles, family obligations and values related to intimate relationships. In addition to this, these women are also socialized in the host culture which promotes different values. According to Krishnan & Berry (1992) “these women must try to balance potentially disparate values, creating significant acculturative stress” (as cited in Inman, 2006, p.307). There are two areas that cultural conflicts arise for these women, which include intimate relations and gender role expectations. In a tradition South Asian family dating and premarital sex are shunned upon, whereas in the host culture, there is an acceptance towards dating and premarital relations. There are also contradicting messages in regards to gender roles. As stated by Inman (2006) traditional South Asian women “are expected to be selfless and project legitimacy through cultural involvement, and values that are contradictory to Western notions includes independence and separate identities” (p. 307). There is a significant difference in the conflict that different generation women face. In addition to the conflict regarding intimacy for first generation women and gender roles for second generation women, there is also conflict regarding religious levels. As stated by Inman (2006) “higher levels of religiosity have accounted for patriarchal views, disapproval of interracial marriages, lack of permissiveness with daughters’ dating and greater intimate relations conflict (p.308). Also, higher educational levels do show higher acculturation in regards to non-traditional gender roles; however the research has shown mixed results. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that there are lower conflict levels.

Intergenerational Conflict

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First generation South Asian individuals face the concern that by living in a western society, that the future generations will lose touch with their culture and the values that are engrained in it. For many South Asians, the values and culture are important to pass on because As stated by an individual studied by Kurien (2005)

I'm pro-tradition because I believe strongly that if our generation doesn't hold onto it, our children won't have it. And it's such an awesome tradition that we have, the culture is amazing. I think it is not doing it justice if we assimilate into Western culture, which isn't really a culture. It's a blending of lots of different cultures. If you don't hold onto tradition, it becomes something that the Western media just commercializes. For instance, I find it so sacrilegious to see Ganesha [a Hindu deity] on a T-shirt. If we let go of our religion, then people are going to wear out Gods on T-shirts, on purses and skirts, and it becomes like nothing. It trivializes everything that our ancestors fought for. (p. 450).

In order to combat this, they have tried to create awareness and interest in the Indian culture among second generation children. As stated by Maisuria (2008):

Many Indian families have reacted to this loss of Indian identity with a renewed interest by parents in maintaining the Indian language, culture and arts. Unlike in the past, religious traditions and rituals are now making a strong presence in many Indian families, with frequent religious events common phenomenon for most Indian families....The children, on the other hand, often feel pressured by the demands of the two cultures. Although many do develop a healthy biculturalism, some may pay the price of a life that feels compartmentalized. (p. 42).

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Other issues that arise in the family include the dynamics of the relationships between first and second generation individuals. As described by Maisuria (2008) a common issue is one that includes first generation mothers and their daughter in laws. A conflict arises when the daughter in law tries to create her own identity by creating new rules and boundaries to define her bicultural identity. This is not a traditional role that the daughter in law would take and therefore she does not meet the expectations of the mother in law which results in conflict within the house. As stated by Kakaiya (2002) “other issues and concerns affecting second generation Indian-Americans includes disparity of values between parents and children pressure in sexual relationships, dating, peer pressure, substance abuse, eating disorders, and a lack of communication between the generations leading to alienation and maladaptive behaviours (as cited in Maisuria, 2008, p. 43).

Conclusion

Being a second generation South Asian individual trying to balance between Eastern and Western values has the ability to create many forms of conflict in one’s life. Family is an important part of the eastern way of life and therefore parents have a great influence over their children and instill values that are important in the culture. Many of these values such as those around dating and marriage are quite different from the western values and therefore have the ability to create intergenerational conflicts within the family. It is important for second generation South Asian individuals to explore both cultures and identify with what is most important for them to develop an identity that aligns with their authentic self. Although, this may not rid them of issues within their family, it can help them live a life in which they feel content.

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Chapter Four: Experiences of Second Generation South Asian Women

Introduction

The following paper looks at the experiences of second generation South Asian women. It looks at their experiences and expectations when it comes to dating and marriage. There is also an exploration into gender roles within the family and expectations of these women in society. Also, there is a look into their experiences around discrimination and racism and its impact on their identity.

According to Sohal (2009) “South Asian women raised in the western world must negotiate between highly polarized expectations – forging an independent identity to compete in society, while simultaneously pressured to retain an eastern world cultural heritage that prescribes fixed gender roles and collectivist familial expectations (p.2). Due to the expectations for these women to balance the two worlds, there is the potential for an identity conflict to occur as these women struggle to be a part of both communities but find they do not fit into either. The following paper will discuss the experiences of second generation South Asian women in regards to expectations and rules around dating, marriage, familial roles and encounters of racism and its impact on identity conflict.

Experiences of Second Generation South Asian Women

Dating

For many second-generation South Asian teenage to middle age women, dating takes place discreetly and involves them lying to their parents. According to Manohar (2008) “there is a lack of intergenerational dialogue on the issues of dating and sexuality in most Indian families,

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save to explicitly forbid the second-generation, especially women from exploring either” (p.574). In an effort to avoid intergenerational conflict, lying is seen as a solution to the problem. There is no way for these girls to discuss this with their parents and therefore they choose to keep it a secret. However, as indicated by Sohal (2009) those South Asian children who are secretly involved in dating tend to select their own marital partner down the road because they tend to choose the western expectations about love and marriage over the eastern approach.

Ralston (1999) looked at the experiences of second generation south Asian women in regards to dating and their views on marriage. The study included eighteen second generation daughters of South Asian immigrant women from Canada: Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Vancouver. The ages ranged from 17 – 29 years old with a median age of 22 years old. They were highly educated, with the youngest completing high school with plans for post-secondary studies, and the two oldest participants completing post-graduate studies. The study looked at lived experiences of these women. As stated by Ralston (1999) lived experience “is conceptualized as the practical activities of everyday life – what actually happens, what people do- rather than as perceived experience” (p.6).

There was a focus on the parental code in regards to girls having relationships with boys in the context of acquaintances, classmates and boyfriends. The rules were that girls were not allowed to engage in any type of relationship with boys. This was also seen as a rule only pertaining to girls and it was different for boys. For example, a son may be allowed to go out with girls, whereas a daughter cannot. As stated by a student in Ralston (1999):

Dated? Oh, no. They say I’m not allowed. [There’s] no choice, it’s not acceptable.

According to them I’m not allowed to talk to boys after classes. That’s where our

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differences are. We have arguments on and off. I ignore them. I have guy friends. I talk to them on the phone. They (my parents) don't know. One of my best friends is an East Indian guy. We're totally platonic friends. I don't understand my parents. My brother can have girl friends who visit here. My brother knows I have boyfriends. My brother is my best friend. He understands. He hates the double standard.....They [our parents] don't understand what it's like growing up here. They have the same expectations of traditions as their parents in India had with them. They can't understand. It's hard to explain where we're (my brother and I) coming from. They can't see (p. 15).

As illustrated in the above quote, there does appear to be a double standard when it comes to rules between boys and girls. This has the potential to lead to actions or behaviours which consist of these girls trying to conceal the fact that they do talk to boys, either as merely friends or in the context of a relationship. There are different reasons why parents in the South Asian community may have this rule. This includes, what others in the community will think if they see their daughter interacting with a male, and also a way to avoid the potential for a relationship to take place. In many of these cases, the parents do not know how to have this discussion with their children and therefore they say something along the lines of "you cannot talk to boys" or it can be an unspoken rule that is known. In Canadian society, however it is common for boys and girls to interact at school and it is not a realistic expectation to put on a girl. As discussed by a participant in Ralston (1999):

Dated? No (I haven't) I'm sure they (my parents) are quite happy about that. It's unspoken that it's a cultural thing. Dating's not acceptable. I think my sisters have.... The hardest thing (growing up) is probably balancing the two cultures. When you grow up in Canada you develop a Canadian mind set. But your parents are still very Indian because

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they grew up there. So they prefer that you be the ideal Indian child. But that's not really reasonable because I was brought up in a different country. So I was always working through that and came up with a lot of compromises. I don't think it's easy for anybody (p. 16).

This illustrates the struggle that can take place for a second generation South Asian girl. The expectations of the family can be quite different than what is seen as being the norm within the society they are living in. Another participant in the study conducted by Ralston (1999) disclosed secretly dating and keeping it from her parents. She also discussed the difficulty of growing up with the rules around socializing being restrictive and also the anxiety that entails keeping a secret relationship from the family. This has a great potential to lead to identity conflict within these girls because those who are choosing to date secretly and want to take more of a western approach in their decision making, may find it impossible to also abide by eastern cultural expectations around not dating.

Marriage

As stated by Kapadia (2009) "many immigrant parents believe that the traditional South Asian family structure is superior to that of the nuclear American family, and are often skeptical of the concept of love marriage because it is something they have never experienced and therefore cannot understand" (p. 31). Love marriage is not common in India and the parents of second generation South Asian women tend to come from this environment. For these individuals, marriage is seen as being a part of a cultural and familial obligation rather than for personal fulfillment of the individual. This has the ability to create conflict within a second

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generation South Asian woman because she may agree to get married to fulfill these duties as opposed to for her own self.

As stated by Singh (2009) “some of the most fundamental differences between North American relationships as compared to South Asian relationships are the different assumptions that these relationships are based upon” (p. 9). Within mainstream marriages, there is a mutual agreement that is seen as being the individual’s choice, and neither of the individuals’ are defined by the relationship and can terminate it when they are no longer satisfied. However, in the South Asian community, marriages are defined within a social hierarchy that has familial roles and expectations that are predetermined. This can lead to interactions between husband and wives as being guided by cultural scripts. As stated by Singh (2009) “it is this social and familial system of predetermined interactions that facilitates traditional South Asian courting rites such as arranged, partially arranged, or modern arranged marriage” (p.10). Arranged marriages are important due to fear that a love marriage may open the doors to an interracial marriage. As stated by Kapadia (2009) parents have a fear that “interracial or intercultural marriages will result in the dilution of culture, causing their children to lose their Indian-ness” (p. 32). The parents fear that their children will lose their Indian identities and adopt a more individualistic value system.

The participants in the study conducted by Ralston (1999) had differing views on arranged marriages. Only one of the eighteen participants wanted to get an arranged marriage but with somebody from Canada as she stated:

I’d prefer someone who had been brought up here. There’s a difference between people brought up here and people brought up in India. Here there’s a more modern outlook;

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there it's a little strict-like a woman's place.... I was in India this summer and there was a big difference. Girls do more womanlike thing-like household stuff, look after the kids and listen to their husband. I guess that's the way it is there. It's much more set there. Here it's a little more lenient. Brought up in Canada, everyone knows that you can be equal here. There I think there's still a line. I would see myself as working as well as being married (p. 21).

The other participants on the other hand did not personally want to get an arranged marriage but were open to the possibility if they found themselves in that circumstance. The reason for being open to the possibility includes the fact that they believed there was more of a level of commitment to making it work.

In the study conducted by Banerjee-Stevens (2009) the participants discussed the significant role that intimate relationships had in understanding their bicultural identity and identifying their authentic values. The participants had differing views on whether they would marry within the culture or not, and what that would look like for them if they did not. As stated by one of the participants:

I want to marry an Indian guy, but not straight from India. I mean, I love India, but because I have been brought up in this [American] tradition, it wouldn't work. I mean, it could, but we would just have so much not in common (p. 75).

As it is illustrated in the above quote, there are differing views on marriage in regards to more traditional versus non-traditional approaches to marriage within the South Asian culture. There are also various reasons why one may choose to abide by the cultural expectations versus what they really want such as pleasing the parents or feeling that they did not have a choice. There are

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also those individuals who forgo the traditional expectations and marry outside the culture and take the risk of disowned by the family.

Role within the Family

As stated by Kundu and Adams (2005) “the woman is socialized early in childhood into the role of wife, mother, and householder...[she] is not a person in her own right, her identity is defined by her parents when she is young, and then when she becomes an adult her husband and his family redefine her identity” (p. 251). As stated by Sohal (2009):

The identity of a South Asian woman is never hers to explore and create for herself. when she is young, her identity is constructed by her parents as she belongs to them. This identity construction unfolds by the training she receives from them on how to be the perfect Indian wife. Then, when she is married and thus becomes an adult, her identity is remolded by her husband, his family, and their expectations of how she should live and conduct herself in the family unit (p. 19).

Sohal (2009) stated that “South Asian children are not considered adults until they wed as marriage provides them with status in the community; therefore, until South Asian daughters are married, their virtue must be maintained in order to ensure a prosperous marital match” (p.18). This virtue consists of modest behaviour, being polite, obedient, and respectful and most importantly being a virgin. Sohal (2009) discusses the importance of South Asian girls refraining from engaging in any sexual activity with another because it is seen as being unacceptable and a potential disaster for the parents’ position in the ethnic community. This is because other members of the ethnic community tend to keep a watchful eye on girls and their actions are highly scrutinized until they take on the role of a wife. Parents in the South Asian community

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value the opinions of others in the same community and hold their reputation and status to a high regard.

Impact of Racism on Identity Formation within an Urban Environment

Beharry and Crozier (2008) looked at the lived experiences of racism for six second generation Canadian women of South Asian descent and how this affected their identity. Through a phenomenological approach five categories emerged. As stated by Beharry and Crozier (2008) these categories included “(a) Initial Awareness of Identity, (b) Advanced Awareness of Identity, (c) Social Interactions, (d) Support and Coping Mechanisms, and Ethnic/Cultural Identity” (p. 267). Initial awareness of identity looked at the participants’ childhood in regards to experiences around awareness of feeling different and excluded in interactions with others. At this point they begin gaining insights on how others viewed them and how they saw themselves as South Asians. They did encounter racism during their childhood and adolescence which shaped how they viewed themselves. As stated by a participant:

I was probably eight years old and I remember being in a swimming pool with a group of people and my hairbrush broke... And this was a group of friends I was with and they just would not share their brush with me because the perception was that Indians were dirty (Indira) (p. 268).

This discrimination from the dominant culture was then internalized creating a standard at which the participant measured herself. Many of the participants measured themselves against the most desirable traits in the dominant Caucasian culture. This led to low self-esteem and the participants feeling unattractive as stated by one of the participants:

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I think when I was in elementary, junior high, I was more, “Oh, I wish I could be blonde like my friends” and you know. I don’t think I was ashamed of my culture but I wasn’t proud of it.... “Oh I hope they like me,” and if I was blonde and whatever, and my name is Jill, then they would like me more, you know (Anu) (p.268).

The initial awareness of their identity led to feelings of anger and confusion around being seen as different and feeling excluded from the dominant culture.

In the category of advanced awareness of identity participants started to undergo the transition into their South Asian identity. As stated by Beharry and Crozier (2008) “while they continued to report events involving racism and discrimination, they also indicated self-agency in developing their own interpretations and choosing their reactions” (p. 268). There was an increase in self-confidence in adulthood which allowed the participants to have a stronger voice and have the ability to choose how to handle situations involving racism.

The third category included social interactions. Within this category, participants discussed their experiences of encountering discrimination within social contexts. As stated by Beharry and Crozier (2008) “participants coped with these culture clashes by spontaneously responding with minimal processing or by carrying out an internal decision making process that allowed them more choice in their responses” (p. 269). The responses depended on who was involved such as someone from the dominant culture or a minority member. The participants stated that they felt Canadian, however the question “where are you from?” was seen as being a way of it being pointed out that they were excluded from being seen as a Canadian. For the participants, having a culturally mixed group of friends led to comments that showed a lack of awareness that they were from a different ethnic group than their group. They did not want to

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appear to be too South-Asian around their mainstream group. A participant in Beharry and Crozier (2008) stated that she would hear comments such as “well, you’re not like them, you’re like us”, and that would be mainstream. This was seen as being a compliment that if she did not act like a South Asian that she could hang out with the mainstream group. While at the same time, they felt that they were being judged by their South Asian peers as well. By not following the expectations of their ethnic group they risked not being seen as a legitimate South Asian individual even though they saw themselves as being Canadian. In situations where these participants faced racism or discrimination, they had to choose how to respond which at times came out in feeling angry and frustrated due to having to confront someone or taking more of a passive role. As stated by one of the participants in Beharry and Crozier (2008):

I have a friend who is dating a guy from Germany, he calls me his little dark angel, and I haven’t said anything because I know he means well, but it’s just inappropriate, I think, It’s completely inappropriate, he calls me black, that’s how he would describe me, she’s this black girl. How about short? (Kamala) (p. 269).

This category also looks at participants narratives about discriminatory social situations that lead to a process of deciding how to respond based on different factors such as, the motivation of the one saying something, rejection by those from either the mainstream or South Asian culture, and having the ability to determine whether to intervene in a situation by educating others about racism. The participants found themselves in a constant struggle while trying to seek acceptance by both the Canadian and South Asian cultures.

The fourth category looks at support and coping mechanisms. The participants had both individual strategies of coping, as well as support from family, friends and the community when

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facing a racist situation. In order to develop tolerance towards situations of discrimination and racism, the participants came to the realization that anyone could have such feelings towards any other group. In order to build acceptance of their culture, support from family and friends was crucial. They were able to draw strength from their parents in accepting their culture. Also, the participants had various ways of dealing with discrimination as opposed to just feelings of anger and frustration.

The fifth category looked at ethnic/cultural identity. Many participants talked about identifying themselves as Canadians as opposed to being a visible minority. However, as stated by Beharry and Crozier (2008) “in regard to self-construction of their identity and how they wanted others to see them, participants talked of wanting a balance between recognition that they were Canadian and recognition that they had a different ancestry equally important to that of Caucasian Canadian; to be accepted as who they were as South Asians as well as feeling Canadian” (p. 271). The way that these participants were able to see themselves as both South Asian and Canadian reflected their acceptance of who they were and identified the complexity of negotiating their identity in the larger society.

Conclusion

There are a variety of expectations that are placed on second-generation South Asian women which do not align with the western way of life. Expectations and rules around dating and marriage continue to create conflict within these individuals who are trying to fit into western society while trying to abide by the cultural expectations put on them. This has the ability to lead to issues around identity conflict because these women can tend to not be sure of which aspects of each culture to take on or they tend to take on roles that are not consistent with their true authentic self. In addition to this, exposure to racism and discrimination also has the ability to lead to identity conflict within second-generation South Asian women because it shapes the way they view themselves. This is done through the internalization of the discrimination which creates a standard at which they view themselves. It is definitely a challenge for second-generation South Asian women to live in two worlds they do not feel like they fit into, while trying to be accepted by both worlds. However, having this internal conflict can lead to one examining their identity which in turn leads to one living a more authentic life.

Chapter Five: Diverse Counselling Position for Counselors

Diverse Counselling Positions

The following paper looks at the diverse counselling positions counselors can take when working with Second-Generation South Asian women. It is important for therapists to be cross-culturally competent due to the diverse environment we live in. According to the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011), there are 1,615,925 South Asians in Canada and within this population there are 229,510 second generation South Asian women. This high rate of South Asian individuals living in Canada means that counselors do have a high chance of encountering clients from this population and deal with issues around identity conflict. Therefore, it is important for counselors to be cross culturally competent. According to Farrell (2008) in order to embody a diverse counseling posture, counselors must be willing to analyze their own cultural existence and contributions to the therapeutic relationship while being openly receptive to the diversity of their clients (p. 46). Skilled counsellors must be sensitive and actively engaged in avoiding discrimination, prejudices, and stereotyping. This improves the chances for successful interactions with not only South Asian individuals but also other non-dominant groups.

It is important for counselors to explore their personal cultural identity prior to engaging in cross-cultural training because they get a better understanding of where they stand in regards to their values, beliefs, and biases. In order to become cross culturally competent counselors need to understand their own cultural being. As stated by Farrell (2008) some suggestions that could assist counselors in increasing their self-awareness include “increasing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships from within one’s own culture and outside of one’s culture, exposing yourself to cross-cultural information for personal/professional development, creating counseling

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space that is inviting to a variety of people and becoming intentional with practices that increase the salience of your practice (p.49). All of these factors can assist in a counselor learning about different cultures and allow them to have a diverse counselling practice.

As stated by Bashir (2006) a cultural identity is the result of many factors that contribute to one's development. It is comprised of many factors and is characterized by a sense of belonging and group identity. Factors that may influence the development of cultural identity include personal experiences, expectations from the family, gender roles, level of acculturation, level of education, generational status and gender. Whereas the components that create ones cultural identity include their race, ethnicity, sexuality, level of spirituality, whether they have a disability and their socioeconomic class. In order to become more culturally aware it is important to be aware of how these factors play a role and shape one's life. Therefore, it is recommended that therapists take on a theoretical approach that includes those factors. As stated by Farrell (2008)

The multicultural-feminist-social justice theory and the RESPECTFUL acronym are used to illuminate the following:

Religious/spiritual identity

Economic class background

Sexual identity

Psychological maturity

Ethnic/racial identity

Chronological/developmental challenges

Traumatic experiences and other threats to one's well being

Family identity and history

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Unique physical characteristics

Location of residence and language differences (p.57).

In order to explore a client's cultural identity, it is important to look at these factors and how they influence their identity. It is also important for counselors to look at how these factors shape their own identity. This can lead to them questioning who they are as cultural beings and assess their ability to conduct cross-cultural counseling.

It is important for therapists to ask how their approach is inclusive and exclusive of diversity in order to avoid engaging in cultural ambivalence. As stated by Farrell (2008):

They must be willing to ask: To what extent is my personal orientation culturally appropriate? Additionally, it is important for counselors to examine the extent to which their theoretical approach has (a) residual effects of their biases, beliefs, and values; (b) an openness to the worldviews and realities of clients; (c) an acceptance of multiple truths; (d) the ability to adapt and be flexible in the process of change; and (e) ways to draw on the diversity of both the counselor and client to help establish the therapeutic relationship (p. 57).

By asking these questions, it allows counselors to assess how culturally diverse their practice is.

This can also allow them to have the opportunity to realize that they need to become more culturally diverse if they find that they are lacking in that area. This can also lead to the counselor being able to create a more inviting space and become more aware of their biases and beliefs.

Therapist Biases

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According to Hays (2001) “many therapists, although recognizing that biases occur in the larger culture, fail to see the biases in their own theoretical orientations and believe that their particular approaches are relatively value-free” (p.46). It is important for counselors to be aware that their personal beliefs and lifestyles are reflected in their values within therapy because these are used to measure success in therapy. An example of this can include seeing a client gaining self-awareness and self-discovery as being a measure of success in therapy. This could be seen as success when looking at an individualized type of approach. Whereas, when working with individuals from a collectivist culture it is important to keep in mind that some people may be more interested in obtaining emotional support or finding ways of setting boundaries but putting the family first and being able to do so can measure success in therapy. It is important for therapists to have awareness around what they value and how those values can affect their work with clients who may not share similar values. For example, when working with second generation South Asian woman, it is important for the therapist to assess how much family cohesion is valued over individual desires and goals. As stated by Hays (2001) using an East Indian family as an example:

The therapist might think to herself: “I value independence and egalitarian interactions, but this family does not. This family is enmeshed, authoritarian, and patriarchal.” Such a black-and-white- conceptualization focuses on differences as negative. It also ignored the possibility that the family does value independence and equality but that other values have a higher priority or that value priorities vary depending on the situation (p.49).

Being able to understand a client’s values is important in helping a therapist connect with a client and be able to understand them. Therefore, it is crucial that the counsellor understands the experiences the client gives in terms of the client’s background, frame of reference, and

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norms of social behaviour, because those are the factors that influence the client's perceptions and values. Collins and Arthur (2005) state that a challenge before counsellors is to "gain self-awareness and come to know others in a way that bypasses cultural barriers and stereotypes and allows us to connect in a real and meaningful way with each other" (p.61). This can assist in creating a strong therapeutic alliance and also allow for effective therapy to take place. As stated by Huang (2003) the strongest association between process and outcome was found within the therapeutic alliance. The client and therapist alliance is the strongest predictor of having a successful outcome.

Cultural Self-Assessment

Hays (2001) explores approaches that therapists can take when working with clients regarding issues around cultural identity. This is done through various exercises that therapists can use with the client. As stated by Hays (2001):

One way to begin thinking about the influence that diverse cultural factors have had on you is by doing the following exercise. First, take a lined piece of paper, and on the left side, write the acronym ADDRESSING vertically, leaving space to the right of and below each letter. Next, record a brief description of the influences you consider salient for yourself in each category. If current influences are different from those that influenced you growing up, note the salient influences and identities in relation first to your upbringing, and then to your current contexts (p.42).

The acronym ADDRESSING stands for: age and generational influences, developmental disability or a disability acquired later in life, religion and spiritual orientation, ethnic and racial identity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or indigenous heritage, national origin and

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gender. This is used as a form of self-assessment for the client, but also helps the therapist gain valuable information on the client's cultural influences and how they identify. The degree to how helpful this exercise is for a client depends on how much the client discloses. For example, when looking at age and generational influences, it would not be beneficial to just state one's age. However, as stated by Hays (2001) "exploring the generational influences-including historical and sociocultural contexts related to your age and particular developmental phases-offers a rich source of material regarding the meanings of these influences and identities" (p.44). There are certain questions that counselors can use in order to elicit more information in each area. This can include asking questions around what generational roles make up the clients core identity which can include being a mom, aunt, adult child, etc. This work can also be done in the context of a group, where there is the opportunity to learn about other cultures and gain insights about one's own identity. The goal of this exercise is to promote self-awareness in an effort to help an individual who may be struggling with identity conflict.

Understanding the role of privilege in accordance with one's identity is also important when working through the cultural self-assessment. As stated by Hays (2001):

There is a focus on privilege (rather than oppression) because I have found that therapists' areas of privilege are usually the areas they are less knowledgeable about and less aware of. In contrast, people are usually very aware of the areas in which they feel oppressed, because they have spent more time thinking about their experiences of oppression (p.45).

This can be done through going back to the exercise and putting a (*) next to each of the areas where an individual holds a dominant cultural identity. Then they are asked to look over the

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ADDRESSING self-description paying attention to the stars. Through this, people are able to see just how much privilege they do have which can be surprising because those who did not know they held any privilege and hold a minority identity are able to see that they may be privileged in other areas. This can be very empowering during therapy.

Conclusion

Overall, it is important for therapists to educate themselves and gain knowledge on cultures they have less experience working with. This has to be done in a manner where they are open to learning about the culture and are aware that not all of the information they read is correct. They will come across biased articles, and they have to be aware of who wrote the article. Conducting this research can affect the therapist's ability to connect with clients from different cultural backgrounds. As stated by Hays (2001) "culturally responsive practice begins with the therapist's commitment to a lifelong process of learning about diverse people across cultures and life spans" (p. 61). It is also important for the therapist to understand their personal values and its impact on their work. Ultimately, the therapist's dedication to becoming more culturally aware leads to a deeper understanding of their client and their needs, in addition to a deep appreciation for the richness of their diverse experiences.

Chapter Six: Findings and Future Direction

Findings

According to the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011), there are 1,615,925 South Asians in Canada. Out of this population there are many South Asian individuals who migrated from India and have children born in Canada, 229,510 of whom are second generation South Asian women (Statistics Canada, 2011). Due to this significant number of second-generation South Asian women in Canada, it is important for counselors to be culturally sensitive and aware of the issues these women are faced with due to their bicultural status.

Identity conflict can occur when women are expected to retain the cultural beliefs and values that they were raised in, even after marriage, while having an independent identity in order to thrive in the environment they grew up in. The conflict that arises when trying to fit into both of these worlds but not feeling a part of either has the potential to lead to stress, confusion and emotional distress (Sohal, 2009). Being a second generation South Asian individual trying to balance between Eastern and Western values has the ability to create many forms of conflict in one's life.

Factors that may influence the development of cultural identity include personal experiences, expectations from the family, gender roles, level of acculturation, level of education, generational status and gender. Whereas the components that create one's cultural identity include their race, ethnicity, sexuality, level of spirituality, whether they have a disability and their socioeconomic class. Family is an important part of the eastern way of life and therefore parents have a great influence over their children and instill values that are important in

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the culture. Many of these values such as those around dating and marriage are quite different from the western values and therefore have the ability to create intergenerational conflicts within the family. It is important for second generation South Asian individuals to explore both cultures and identify with what is most important for them to develop an identity that aligns with their authentic self. Although, this may not rid them of issues within their family, it can help them live a life in which they feel content.

In order for a therapist to become more culturally aware it is important to be aware of the factors that play a role and shape one's life. As stated by Hays (2001) "culturally responsive practice begins with the therapist's commitment to a lifelong process of learning about diverse people across cultures and life spans" (p. 61). It is also important for the therapist to understand their personal values and its impact on their work. Ultimately, the therapist's dedication to becoming more culturally aware leads to a deeper understanding of their client and their needs, in addition to a deep appreciation for the richness of their diverse experiences.

Future Direction

Due to the diverse population of individuals in Canada, it is important for therapists to be aware of different cultures and issues that certain populations may face. In order to appeal to a population such as second-generation South Asian women, counselors need to be aware of the conflict these women face as a result of their bicultural status. It would be beneficial to create a manual that has information about issues second-generation South Asian women face which could be helpful for counselors who are not familiar with the culture. However, in order to create this there needs to be more research conducted pertaining specifically to identity conflict within

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this population because there is not a lot of research out there. Also, this manual could also contain specific techniques that counselors could utilize when working with this population.

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