



Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture

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The study examines the social and cultural experiences of adolescent female belonging to various south Asian immigrant groups in Canada. Applying qualitative research method, the authors interviewed 22 adolescent girls of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in Montreal. Like other immigrant communities, south Asian families undergo acculturation stress. South Asians tend to integrate secular European cultural elements with their culture; however, family and community structure remain male dominated. The study showed that gender roles were maintained through gender segregation, control over social activities of girls and arranged marriage. Interviewees felt that their parents and communities have more stringent rules for female socialization than any other community in Canada. The study also found that adolescent girls perceived high social cost attached to protest and dissent, therefore, they accept prevalent conditions and expect to change social situation gradually. Some adolescents undergo stress resulting in behavioral problems.

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Introduction

Adolescence is often considered as a difficult period of transition to adulthood. This age is characteristically difficult for females, due to social and cultural expectations of female roles in society. The situation becomes even more complex when a family or group migrates from one country to another. Immigrant groups undergo fundamental social and economic changes in a new social and cultural environment. Migration causes tension between the traditions that a group would like to retain and the host culture, resulting in individuals and families redefining and renegotiating their roles and identities within and outside the community. This study is an examination of the social and cultural experiences of adolescent females belonging to various south Asian* immigrant groups in Montreal, Canada. The study examined how female roles are changing in south Asian families. The study focused on two questions:

- (1) What strategies do south Asian families employ to maintain traditional female roles?

The study examined the processes and techniques used by south Asian families and communities to maintain traditional culture and specifically female roles in society. In this respect, it analyzed the process of socialization and the institution of marriage as key techniques in perpetuating traditional female roles.

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*South Asians in Canada represent diverse groups of people divided on the basis of religion, culture, language and nationalities. In political taxonomy, all these groups have been identified together as south Asians, their origin in the Indian subcontinent being the common denominator.

- (2) How are south Asian female adolescents in Canadian society effecting cultural change? It especially explored their views on power and control in families and communities, gender equity, and social change.

Literature review: adolescence, migration and traditional values

Gender schema theory organizes and analyzes information related to gender roles in society and explains how gender roles are perpetuated (Jacklin, 1989). Most researchers classify sex-role ideologies along a continuum ranging from traditional to modern. Traditional ideologies apportion men with greater social status and power than women. They also legitimize male domination and control over women, economic and political resources of community and society. In contrast, modern ideologies allow a more egalitarian distribution of social status and power (Best and William, 1997).

South Asian migration to Canada started toward the end of the 19th century; however, it was in the 1970s that an increasing number of south Asians moved to Canada (Buchignani and Indra, 1985). Currently, there are over 750,000 south Asians in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1998). Most of the south Asians migrated to Canada for economic reasons. However, a small number of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were also refugees seeking political asylum.

Migration is a tremendous transformative experience for people. They engage themselves in a struggle to construct a new identity. Bharati Mukherjee calls it “refashioning the self” (Sant-Wade and Radell, 1992). Cultural groups face the issue of cultural adaption in a pluralist society. Immigrants have “dual frame of reference” (Suarez-Orozco, 1991) and they make comparisons between “here” and “there”. Through acculturation, they learn behavioral repertoire that is appropriate to the new cultural context. In the process, some “cultural shedding” may also occur that may be accompanied by “cultural conflicts” (Berry, 1992). In cases where there is cultural conflict, individuals may experience “acculturative stress” (Berry and Sam, 1997, p. 289).

South Asian groups, having a long history of living in diverse societies, tend to adopt new values and retain and renew their cultural and social values. Furnham and Sheikh’s (1993) study shows that Indians and Pakistanis adjust well in the host country even when they do not totally integrate. Nevertheless, the process of negotiating cultural change is a difficult one. The south Asian family structure has altered greatly, e.g. nuclear or single parent families are replacing extended families (Buchignani and Indra, 1985). If parents still live with their married children, their authority has become merely symbolic. The sources of social support are inevitably reduced (Furnham and Sheikh, 1993, p. 23). Women have also become earning members of the family. Studies have shown that women achieve greater freedom after they enter the workforce (Ewen, 1985). However, it is questionable whether female participation in the work force has equalized gender roles to a great degree.

Societies and communities employ various strategies and mechanisms to maintain power discourse. In most societies, socialization plays the most significant role as a technique of habituation and cultural control. Socialization is a process of regulating behavior and educating children into procedures for social interaction based on core cultural values (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1990). Within the context of a traditional culture, socialization may mean instilling respect for authority, conformity to social roles through beliefs, rituals,

customs, and proselytizing about the validity and supremacy of their cultural truths. Socialization also inculcates differential roles of male and female in society (Berry and Sam, 1997). However, the degree of distinction between gender roles may differ from society to society. In traditional societies, females may be given more domestic responsibilities and males non-domestic roles (Best and William, 1997). Barry *et al.* (1975) examined socialization practices in over 100 societies and found that boys are generally raised to achieve and to be self-reliant and independent, while girls are generally raised to be nurturing, responsible, and obedient.

For immigrant communities, the indicators of ethnic identity are language, friendships, social organizations, religion, cultural traditions and politics. Involvement in the social and cultural practices of one's ethnic group is the most widely used indicator of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). However, immigrant children may be influenced by cultural values outside community. Adolescents who are born or grow up in Western societies without the benefit of extensive cultural experiences undergo conflict and encounter contradictions between heritage and the host cultures. Research indicates that ethnic identity declines significantly in the second generation (Phinney, 1986; Fathi, 1972; Constantinou and Harvey, 1985). For instance, some south Asian adolescents may not speak parental languages or they inevitably acquire cultural values in secular society that may reduce their strength of association with their ancestral culture or religion.

Naidoo (1984) thinks that south Asian adolescent girls are raised in far more protected, controlled and sheltered home settings when compared to the majority of adolescents in Canadian society. They face rigid gender specific norms concerning socialization. Some of the groups have: "...become more rigidly traditional. Women are subjected to a stricter form of *purdah* (veil) than what they knew before migration" (Bagley, 1984, p. 18). Gender segregation is a prominent instrument in socialization that effectively manages the distribution of power and social reward, and also defines gender specific social roles. **The second generation of south Asian Canadians has very different cultural experiences from their parents and many of them have a limited encounter with their ancestral culture.** Buchignani (1984) has pointed out that while first-generation immigrants are inclined to hold fast to traditional values, second-generation immigrants seem to acculturate into the predominant culture of the larger society.

Many traditional cultures maintain their cultural practices regarding marriage and sex roles even after migration. The major deciding factors in early or arranged marriage are the degree of traditionality of culture in family and community, level of parental and sometimes children's education, and social status (Dion and Dion, 1993). If a group has strong collectivistic culture, there are greater chances of arranged or early marriage. There is a great variation in the type of arranged marriages, from community elders making decisions to allowing children to make the decision with parental consent. Arranged marriages are still the norm in a number of south Asian groups (Buchignani, 1984). Vaidyanathan and Naidoo (1990/91) found that Asian Indian immigrants to Canada show generational changes in attitudes towards love and marriages. Although 63 per cent of first-generation immigrants have had arranged marriages, a large proportion of these believed that "love marriages" were an option for their offspring. Moreover, 79 per cent of the second generation indicated they wanted more freedom in the selection of a mate and 75 per cent supported the notion that love should precede marriage. Studies done in the U.K. with south Asians indicate a high degree of religious homogeneity among married couples (Robinson, 1980). Inter-racial or interfaith marriages are considered a threat to the group solidarity (Schaefer, 1980). A

structural aspect of interethnic marriages is that it weakens ethnic ties. In contrast, the social function of the arranged marriage is to preserve group solidarity, strengthen family relationships and keep the family's economic resources within the community (Broude, 1994). Consequently, "marriage outside one's ethnocultural group is rare, except among the highly educated urban elites" (Buchignani, 1984, p. 120). The institution of marriage is an important instrument of social control. From early childhood, children are encouraged to socialize and are expected to marry within the religiosocial group, especially girls, in whom the idea of marriage is inculcated as an important goal in their lives (Broude, 1994). In most cases, educational and career goals are secondary or are important so long as they facilitate opportunities to get a better marriage proposal, or support the economy of one's family.

Method

The study was undertaken in 1991–1992 in the province of Quebec, Canada, focusing on the area of greater Montreal. The authors who conducted the interviews originated from South Asia but did not know any participants prior to this research.

As researchers, we tried to maintain objectivity and tried to be good listeners and asked questions (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Having south Asian origin, it was easier to mingle with various groups and "get close to the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 1980, p. 43). However, we did not know the participants previously, and this helped maintain objectivity in the research process.

Participants

Twenty-two adolescent females were randomly selected for interviews from a prospective list of 54. The criteria for the sampling were that participants were educated in Canada and were in high school or recent graduates. The ages of these females ranged from 15 to 17 years. All of them were second-generation immigrants coming from diverse social and economic classes and family structures, including single parent families. Eighty per cent of them were in high

Table 1 *Characteristics of the participants*

Description		Place of birth	
Religion		Canada	n= 15 (67.5%)*
Hinduism	n=12 (54.5%)	Europe	n=3 (13.5%)
Islam	n=10 (45.5)	South Asia	n=2 (9%)
		U.S.	n= 2 (9%)
Ancestral language		Age (Years)	
Hindi	n=6 (27%)*	Y=15	n=7 (31.8)
Urdu	n=6 (27%)	Y=16	n=10 (45.5)
Gujrati	n=4 (18%)	Y=17	n=5 (22.7)
Punjabi	n=3 (13.5%)		
Sindhi	n=1 (4.5%)		
Bengali	n=2 (9%)		

*Due to rounding up, may not add up to 100 per cent.

schools and 20 per cent had graduated from high schools within the year. In the final list, interviewees (more precisely their parents) were from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Sixty-seven per cent of the participants were born in Canada, 9 per cent in the United States, 13 per cent in Europe, 9 per cent in East Africa and 9 per cent south Asia. Those who were born outside Canada had their schooling in Canada.

Linguistically, their parents spoke Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujrati, Bengali and Sindhi languages, indicating immense cultural diversity even within this small sample. Most of the adolescents did speak both English and French, but almost half of them did not speak their parental language fluently. As for religious affiliation, 54.5 per cent belonged to Hinduism and 45.5 per cent to Islam.

Materials and procedures

The study utilized the qualitative method, and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Qualitative methods are often used effectively in case studies and biographical research, in which personal narratives and histories are important sources of data. To maintain accuracy and validity of data, all interviews were tape-recorded, and written notes of observation were made (Wolcott, 1990).

A pilot study was conducted in which eight students were interviewed. Questions related to socialization, education, and marriage were asked in the interviews. An interview guide was generated on the basis of literature on the subject and the pilot study. Interview questions were based on four broad categories: (1) socialization; (2) marriage; (3) dissent; and (4) the future of south Asian women. Other issues, such as racism, discrimination, participants' educational and career goals, and extracurricular interests also emerged in the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured so that research questions were discussed with greater freedom with the participants. These interviews were conducted at various locations, such as community centers, students' homes, and schools. The length of interviews varied from one to two and half-hours.

After the formal approval of the research design by the academic ethics committee for the use of human subjects, a prospective list was generated through community schools such as language schools for teaching of Urdu, Hindi, Gujrati and Bengali. Other sources were social and welfare organizations that provided contacts with families who had adolescent children. Authors sought parental consent for the interviews. A few parents wished that interviews were conducted at their homes or community centers, though none of them were present during the interviews.

The participants were informed of the research objectives and they were assured of privacy, which seemed to be a very important issue to them. They were informed that they could abstain from answering any question if they wished to do so. Pseudonyms are used to maintain privacy.

Results

Process of socialization among south Asian families

For the south Asian adolescent girls, like other adolescent boys and girls, the key concerns were socialization, going out, parties and dating. The control over their socialization seemed to be the major problem for south Asian adolescent females. Joti, who complained that:

“parents don’t let them go out or they don’t let them mix with other students,” expressed this concern of young women. Chetna, about to graduate from the high school, complained:

Whenever my friends have a party, I am not allowed to go. One of my friends invited me to a party, but then she remarked: “I never see any of you at parties because you are probably studying or your parents don’t let you go out.”

Tara, making an observation about south Asian families, stated that the parents take their children to visit family friends on weekends or attend cultural events and they do not allow them to socialize without supervision. Reporting her own experiences, she narrated:

I don’t go for dances and parties. I sometimes go with my parents on weekends to visit family friends. I don’t really like going out with my parents. I have nothing to do there, so I stay at home most of the time.

Shama, talking about parental concern with inter-gender relationships, stated that in their community, parents often organize parties for their children. “We have Christmas and New Year parties where children and parents get together and celebrate.”

The researchers attended one of the New Year’s parties where the community had arranged food, non-alcoholic beverages, music and dances. Parents participated with their children in all festivities. Parents celebrate the festival to prevent their children from feeling alienated. They maintained gender segregation, and boys and girls mingle with each other within certain etiquette. Parental presence at these parties maintained certain decorum amongst the youth.

Most south Asian ethnocultural groups disapprove dating. Reena, whose father was a professional and mother a homemaker, noted:

Dating and having boyfriends in school—most Indians are not allowed to do that. Other races do not approach an Indian because they know that she is not going to be allowed. I’m cut off in the middle. I have to be Indian sometimes. I’m not allowed to do certain things.

Saleema, a high school graduate, thinks her parents have a ‘liberal’ attitude toward children’s socialization, but adds:

In my family, my parents don’t mind if my brother goes out with a girl, but they will say “no” to me, if I want to go out with a boy—because [they argue] I am more vulnerable, because I am a girl. Then I would argue that if you let *ba* [brother] go out, why not me?

The south Asian parents face a dilemma. If they allow boys to socialize freely, female members challenge this parental decision. Chetna complained: “I think there are double standards in some families. The girls are not allowed to go out but the guys are. Guys are allowed to date but girls are not.”

Deepa echoed the same concern, saying:

They [parents] are very conservative. Parents don’t allow girls to wear make-up. They don’t do their hair. They wear long skirts; it looks very out of date. A lot of these parents will hang up [the telephone] if a boy calls.

Marriage and women’s subordination

Among female interviewees, a common concern was that they might be forced into an arranged marriage. All interviewees expressed their resentment against the “arranged

marriage” or an early marriage because they would have little or no say in it, or because they would be “given in marriage” to a person whom they do not know. Mala, expressing her discord, said:

I know there is the arranged marriage thing, but I won't let it happen. I won't allow my parents to make the decision completely. I will have a say in it.

Mala considered her parents very “open” because they were relatively flexible about her socialization. They allowed her to go for her senior prom with her date. Yet, she felt that when it comes to marriage, her parents might force her into an arranged marriage. Chetna made a very thoughtful statement about the issue. She said:

Honestly, I don't like what I see for girls. I find that they get married way too young at 18 or so. First of all, you haven't even finished your studies. What are you going to do? Second, you are not prepared; you never had a life of your own to build up. You go straight from one house to another. You never really get to see what kind of person you are. Although my parents still agree with the notion of arranged marriage, I don't. You meet a guy one week ahead and you marry him—that doesn't appeal to me. They think if you are over 20, you are past your prime. To me, 20 is when you start your life. You are at university. You meet new people and experiment and see what you want to do. I find they settle down much too quickly and never get a chance to complete their education.

Chetna explained that she sees many girls at the temple who are sheltered, have little education and do not have any friends outside the community. She observed that if they get married early they would be dependent on their husbands.

While the preservation of the institution of marriage may ensure stability, it also maintains the status quo because the traditional idea of marriage provides a girl the security of home and shelter and it confirms her role as caretaker of the family, bearing and rearing children. About 25 per cent of the participants felt that they would have an arranged marriage, 45 per cent thought that parents would seek their opinion in this matter and might respect their wishes. The rest of the participants anticipated that parents probably would not object if they chose their mates from their ethno-religious group. However, there was high level of skepticism about parental support with regard to inter-religious or interracial marriage. Marriage will remain an important parameter in defining female status and role in the family and community.

Adolescent dissent and cultural constructs

The signs of change in traditional power or family structure could be witnessed in various forms such as adolescents' changing dress code, less participation in community activities and increasing dissent. Many admitted that they “wear Indian clothes very rarely.” They “feel different” from their parents and “feel more comfortable wearing ‘Western clothes’.” Once they are in colleges, they move even further from their heritage culture and show greater assimilation into popular culture (Talbani, 1992). It was observed that while boys and girls are enrolled in community schools by their parents when they are young, they participate less and less in community activities as they grow older.

Interestingly, many adolescent females reflected on the change they have seen in their own behavior and attitude when they went to high school, from being docile and shy to vocal and gregarious. One such case was of Chaya who admitted that she has changed

tremendously since she joined high school. Her attitudes, the way she dresses, and her habits had been radically transformed. Talking about her metamorphosis, she said:

I have become so different from what my parents are, because my parents are [culturally] Indians and I am not. I am more like my friends. I do the things they do. I go out. I do not do things that regular Indian girls do.

Adolescent females expressed their disapproval of traditional control in various ways. Joti mentioned that while girls do not confront their parents, they use other ways to express their discontent. She stated:

They [girls] go out whenever they want, they just don't tell their parents. They know that every time they ask something, they will get a negative reply. [As a result] they become very stubborn, very arrogant and just rebellious in general. They find that what they have been taught at home is not right because it doesn't coincide with society, so they know that their parents are wrong. Maybe not when they are six but in their teens they would say "hey! something is wrong; that is not true what they told me." When they are 18, there is nothing left to stop them from doing what they want. So I think if parents want to keep a relationship with their kids, they should be aware of the situation in life otherwise it would be a problem.

Deepa reflected that the restrictions that south Asian parents have imposed on their female children would result in unhappiness. She noted that parents as well as youth have to adapt to the society. Deepa thought that such control might lead to dissidence. They may reach a point where they would rebel against parental authority. She stated:

It might be running away from home. It might be doing something to get attention. It might be total disregard of everything, getting poor grades at school, it could be anything but the parents have to realize that once they are 18, they are on their own and if they want to leave, they would just leave. They [parents] will hold on to their empty values.

The adolescent girls' responses expressed the pressures and tensions under which they live. Their dissent takes many different forms; in some cases, it is "behind the back", sometimes it is open rebellion, and often it is in the form of suppressed frustrations. One adolescent girl noted: "Some parents, if they find a boy just happens to be looking at their girl, they will lock her up." They feel that such control should not be continued. "It doesn't matter if they are little less Indian, but they should not be monitored in such a manner."

Tara was a young girl who is very sheltered and isolated. She was not allowed to go out freely. She studied in a girls' school and did not go anywhere else. Hence, there were very few chances that she could come into contact with boys. She expressed her sense of alienation saying: "I like to go to parties but my father doesn't approve." She was asked: "How do you feel about not getting the permission?" She replied: "Sometimes I feel, why not? I'm a responsible person, there is no danger. Sometimes I really think about it. But I don't know what to do. Since kids are supposed to have a lot of fun, I would also like to. . . (pause) Sometimes I feel left out."

The consequence of this isolation is that she has resigned herself to accept circumstances as they are. The only opportunity she had for socialization is at the community's Sunday school, where she did not attend any classes but "that's the only opportunity" when she could "go out of the home." Tara spent most of her time in studies. She thought that part of the reason that she is in a girls' school is because her parents want her "to be separated from

boys.” Next year, she would be going to college and would be confronting boys there. She was very nervous and found herself unprepared for a co-education environment.

Constraints placed on young women affect their relation with parents and compel them to deviance and rebellion. Fatima, relating stories about her classmates, said:

I know of one individual who ran away from home. She got into drugs—she is a very extreme case. She had to go to rehab for a year. Now she is back at school but she doesn't get along with any one. There is another person I know who tried to commit suicide because her parents put too much pressure on her and that was her way of getting attention. A lot of kids rebel. A lot of other kids just accept it gradually.

The interviews indicated that there is discontent with the existing situation among young women, and some of them undergo serious stress.

Adolescent females between tradition and change

The adolescent girls perceived future with a mixture of fear, hope, and pessimism, as the following data show.

I asked Rani, whose mother is a teacher, “What would be your role in the future as a woman? Would it be different, say, from your mother's?” She replied: “Not really! It will be quite similar, bringing home an income for the family, bringing up children. . . as good people, with certain values.” Adolescent females feel that they will have so much pressure to conform that even if they desire change, it will be extremely difficult for them to do so. Mala noted that many south Asian women “are housewives and a lot of them are also highly qualified. . . Male members are more vocal, they speak, and ladies do the house work.” Even those women, who go out to work and bring in an additional income, bear the total burden of household work. They are conditioned to accept unequal status and distribution of work. Laila remarked about the equal distribution of work: “I rarely see that happening, that is very rare!” This situation is similar to other communities, especially immigrant, where women work outside home and take on household responsibilities as well (Diedre *et al.*, 1987).

Hence, pessimism is generally prevalent among the girls about the prospect of a radical change in the status of women. The reason, however, is not only the inertia of south Asian culture but also the existing gender inequalities in Canadian society. Chetna noted that even though “Indian children growing up around here will have a bit more of the European culture, and will have more liberal ideas,” the issue of gender equality “has nothing to do with background, actually it is with every family.” Laila re-iterated the same idea, she said: “Even with Europeans, I have seen the mother taking on more day-to-day tasks, plus other work. I really do not see it as fifty-fifty.” Laila felt that women do not get the same opportunities as men in this society. “You do not see many women as presidents of companies or any thing like that.” Chetna said: “There have always been problems for women every where; Look at Marc Lepine.[†] How can you deny it?” She felt Marc Lepine was symptomatic of the problems related to gender bias in the society.

[†]Marc Lepine, a Montreal man, stormed into a classroom at Ecole Polytechnique [an Engineering college in Montreal] on December 6, 1989. He asked all the men to leave the classroom and shot and killed 13 women, before shooting himself. This incident shocked the entire country, particularly the deliberate act of singling out the female members of the class as victims. Lepine, in his note, expressed his resentment against women's liberation and specifically mentioned that feminist women were his target. It was also seen as a negative reaction to the presence of females in a male-dominated field, Engineering.

Although there is confusion and pessimism about the status of south Asian woman, there is a strong desire to equalize power relations. Some of adolescents were content to have an improved relationship with the opposite sex. Some felt it would be realistic to think of a gradual change rather than trying to attain total equality. Joti felt that a radical change had already taken place between her mother's generation and hers. She related:

My mother was born and raised in India. There is already a big difference. Here it is like, as a woman you have your liberty, in India you are looked down upon. You're supposed to stay at home and watch the kids, and the men, they go out and work. In this society, we are not looked down upon, it is good here. My mother told me some of her experiences when she was in India. We don't go through all that because we are in Canada. To men who think we should stay home, we will show them that we also want a career as individuals.

When she was asked about achieving equality, and not just the freedom to choose a career, she said that inequalities between men and women will remain for a very long time. When she was asked: "What are the reasons for this pessimism?" She replied very thoughtfully:

I do not think they will ever be equal, because already when you are being brought up in a family, you are sisters and brothers, and your parents react to the brothers differently from the sisters, girls. Already there is some freedom that boys get and girls don't. Already in your family you are treated unequally; your parents think you should not be treated equally, if it does not start at home, in a little place, how could it be in the world?

Joti was asked, why did she think that things would not change? "Would you be able to treat your children equally?" She replied: "I do not know, but the way we have been brought up, it might be difficult. When we will have kids, we may do the same thing. Now we think both (sexes) should be treated equally, but we might treat the son better. We might treat boys differently from girls."

Hence, **gender inequality perpetuates itself due to the socialization at home.** Women internalize knowledge and attitudes that legitimize and normalize inequality. Ascribed roles and stereotypes are part of the social discourse, but there is strong desire to bring about change. Laila convincingly said:

I am going to have a different life style. My grandmother grew up in a big family with lots of children. She got married. She was a housewife. My grandfather was the boss of the house. My mother went to Paris alone to study. I think my life is going to be different from theirs. I am going to have more than what she [mother] has. [Between me and my future partner] I will have equal rights and equal respect. I want to live happily.

The definition of happiness has also changed for south Asian adolescents. It no longer means protection by a man, security of food and shelter. It means equal participation and sharing equal decision-making power. Laila defined the future for women at home and in the community as "equal participation and power." She asserted: "I think she should be given the position of authority. She should be the head of the community."

Discussion and conclusion

During the last three decades, there has been a significant influx of south Asians to Canada. There is already a generation born and grown up in Canada. Their contact with their

heritage culture is through family and limited interaction with the community. This is reflected in their lack of knowledge of heritage languages and other cultural norms. Except for those young people who have grown up in ethnic enclaves, most adolescents adopt the Canadian culture in dress code, language and the acceptance of other social norms. To inculcate gender specific roles and values, parents encourage youngsters to socialize within the religiocultural group. They expose children to Indian and Pakistani movies, television plays, stage shows and music parties. Performers from the countries of Indian subcontinent frequently stage shows at private, community or public gatherings. They tend to influence children's socialization such as with whom they mingle and what activities they participate in, and sometime what fields of education they should enter.

The participants identified three key elements in their interviews regarding socialization: (1) The differential treatment of boys and girls at home; (2) Girls are given less decision-making power; (3) There is more control over their intermingling with the opposite sex.

In other cultures, adolescents go through rebellion and dislike parental control. However, adolescent south Asian women perceive that greater control is exercised in their culture than other cultures, especially when compared with European-Canadians. In most cases, young girls stay at home till they get married; sometimes they live alone if they go to university for higher education.

There exists a core of unwritten rules that dictates how one behaves and interacts with elders, people of the opposite sex, and different age groups. Parents have difficulty in relating to teenage experiences such as going for dances and dating, especially since these rituals of adolescence are quite different from south Asian customs, although, dating and friendships between opposite sexes is prevalent in urban centers of south Asia.

The degree of control depends on the level of parents' conservatism and fear. Tara, quoted earlier, described the limitations faced by south Asian girls in socializing especially with the opposite sex. These limitations alienated her from other societal groups. The pressure to assimilate into the majority ethos creates a further dilemma. Thus, she felt that she has been "cut off in the middle." In her own culture, she found only prescriptions for social conduct, do's and don'ts. She was not "allowed to do certain things" so she felt her choices were taken away.

The notion of arranged marriage is still prevalent in south Asian cultures, as in other traditional cultures, which makes the socialization of south Asian women different from mainstream cultures. It has its roots in the traditional patriarchy of the culture. The arranged marriage has been a key instrument for economic, social and political stability in south Asian culture. It has been used to make political alliances, solidify economic positions, and secure social stability among large families, tribes, and communities. After migration, families and communities use this powerful instrument to foster new social and cultural alliances to ensure social stability. For women, the existence of the traditional customs and rituals of marriages result in an absence of female voices in the social discourse. The arranged marriage plays a central role in maintaining the subordinate role of women in society. Female subordination is expressed, validated and perpetuated through rites and symbols related to marriage. Gender roles are pivotal in the search for stability in a new cultural milieu. Therefore, families and communities will try hard to keep the institution of marriage intact.

However, in south Asian social and cultural organizations, men hold most of the leadership positions and women generally have peripheral roles in the community. As a result, no serious attention is paid to women's issues. There is high social cost associated with being vocal or to express dissenting voices in the community. Many adolescent girls were

aware of it, and they decided to seek gradual improvement of women's status in the community and family. Various studies have indicated that many adolescent girls in south Asian communities face mental problems (Bhatnagar, 1984). They find it difficult to negotiate between cultural control and individual freedom. As one student noted, "For girls it is way harder, just because they are girls."

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