INTERGENERATIONAL INTEGRATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN FAMILIES

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The educated middle and upper classes are in the midst of many changes. While the parents are slow to accept change, children are more willing to move with the times. The paper primarily deals with Indian families living in Canada. Parent-child interaction with regard to the processes of cultural assimilation, dating and marriage, and cultural identity are discussed. For comparison, the attitudes of youth in India with regard to various aspects of social change are also included in this paper.

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Introduction

Parent-child interaction, or, in other words, intergenerational interaction in Indian and/or the South Asian families is the main focus of this paper. In this paper, the emphasis will be on the South Asian immigrant families with some comparison to youth attitudes in India. The study of the immigrant families is primarily based on the experience in Canada. Youth in India whose comments are also included in this study, are university students in Jaipur and Kerala.

In the study of the family, understanding of parent-child interaction provides the most valuable insight with regard to the continuity of cultural traditions. "It also has been observed that the authority and power of parents is correlated with the social pattern that emphasizes the maintenance of tradition. Eisenstadt (1971) points out that societies that emphasize traditional practices are characterised by strong intergenerational bonds. These societies are also characterised by a strong central authority") (Hutter, 1981: 333). However, we are living in a rapidly changing world where modern communications have made knowledge fairly easily available to people living in modern as well as economically developing societies. These powerful forces of social change result in certain ambivalence among parents as well as children about how to cope with continuously modifying value systems and life styles.

Socialization of children goes through various stages from infancy, preteens and finally sex-role socialization. The parents have a crucial impact on the life of the child in infancy which continues with less intensity as age increases. Whenever the parents represent a traditional stable life style, they find it hard to make rapid adjustments when faced with the relatively easy adaptation of their children in a modern environment.

A number of scholars have written about various aspects of child-rearing and the continuing process of socialization. Margaret Mead, in her book Culture and Commitment (Mead, 1970), wrote about the generation gap in contemporary societies. She, of course, has done a significant part of her earlier writing on preliterate societies. She called them post-figurative societies which were conservative and resisted change, where the young are expected to follow the dictates of the older generation. This continues in a more sophisticated level in established
civilizations like China and India where the extended family reinforces the dominance of the adults.

Margaret Mead's quest for comparative studies led her to studies in Samoa and New Guinea. The best known of her publications was "Coming of Age in Samoa" (Mead, 1928). Her comparison of Samoa with American family life was considered a major contribution. Samoan culture was characterized as happy with none of the sexual restraints and lack of sexual violence like rape. However, her portrayal of Samoan socialization is now challenged by Derek Freeman, Professor Emeritus, Australian National University, who has extensive experience of Samoa. His knowledge of the language and culture made him realize that Margaret Mead was misled by her informants. In his book, Margaret Mead and Samoa, The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth (Freeman, 1983) he describes Samoa as a puritanical and authoritarian society and not one which allowed excessive freedom. "Freeman had concluded that Margaret Mead had got it all wrong. The Samoan culture was harsh, competitive, violent in a way which created great stress for adolescents—the teenage suicide rate was high. Rape was more common than in the West and virginity was prized" (The Economist, 1983: 83). She was also criticized for her studies in New Guinea by anthropologists. However, her later studies have been major contributions in understanding parent-child interaction in traditional as well as modern societies.

Another classic scholar was Ruth Benedict. She contrasted the life styles of the average modern American family with that of North American Indian families. Benedict sees American culture as viewing the adult-child or, specifically, the parent-child relationship, in terms of dominance-submission arrangement. In contrast many American Indian tribes explicitly reject the ideal of a child's submissive or obedient behaviour. Benedict argues that Anglo American culture contains discontinuous cultural institutions and dogmas that exert considerable strain on both the interpersonal process and personality system of young individuals (Hutter, 1981: 338-339).

Looking at more modern studies, North American scholars have been influenced by symbolic interactionists. Of all the writing by a number of social scientists, the work of Willard Waller in 1938, which was revised by Reuben Hill in 1951, is important.

Within Waller and Hill's interactional framework, this period of early socialization involves not only the influence of parents of children but also the reciprocal effects of children on partners.---Just as children need to receive love and nurture from their parents to thrive, so do parents need to provide this emotional bonding in fulfilment of their parental roles---The relationships are reciprocal, and because family members are ever changing, the family unit is in a constant state of flux: a dynamic unit (Leslie and Korman, 1985: 207).

In our shrinking world, people of different cultures, including South Asians, are interacting, especially in countries where large-scale immigration has taken place. This is particularly true of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Countries in Central and Northern Europe have also increased immigration from other countries. The majority of immigrants are people looking for better economic prospects. All these immigrants have to make adjustments to an alien environment. They arrive in societies where the pace of change has increased too rapidly even for people who are long settled in these countries. They find it difficult to keep pace with the changes, especially in intergenerational contacts.
For the South Asian immigrants, there are some common elements but there are also significant discontinuities at many levels of social organization. The migrants have responded to their new external social environment differently in different places. At times, the differences in adaptive patterns to regional and cultural differences are what the immigrants brought with them. "Once the critical faculties of children are sharpened by schooling and broader cultural exposure, however, the gap between them and their parents usually widens" (Time, 1985: 73).

Socialization of children in South Asian families, in the traditional setting tended, to focus on socio-cultural continuity rather than change. Parents are not willing to give up their culture, which they often regard as being more meaningful for their cultural identity. However, the children, especially those who are born in modern societies, adapt relatively easily. This, of course, causes an inevitable gap between the parents and children. The concept of cultural continuity is gradually giving way to respect for initiative which was not a feature of the traditional upbringing. Many of the comments here are based on the experience of South Asian immigrants in Canada.

**Process Towards Cultural Assimilation**

South Asian immigrant parents, especially those who are educated, which represent the majority, tended to be less authoritarian. A study by Norman Buchignani among Fijian Indians in Canada indicated that the parents are encouraging their children to adapt to Canadian life, but also face conflicts.

For the most part, parents encourage their children to mix socially with other children, which Fijian children do easily. With parents working, children rapidly become functional Canadian children, for other children become their primary reference group. So thorough is this process of assimilation and acculturation that in many cases children become the major bridge between their parents and the rest of Canadian society.

While parents have generally seen this as a good thing, there are certain aspects of it which they do not like and which make for intergenerational conflicts. Most important of these is that children tend to expect their parents to operate in a "Canadian' mode, especially with respect to how they exercise authority. Hence, the frequent complaint that children will not obey their parents. In addition, parents feel a great sense of uneasiness with respect to how far this process of Canadianization has gone among their children. They would like their children to be both Canadian and Fijian and know full well that the balance has shifted to the Canadian side --- so much so that few children raised primarily in Canada can speak an Indian language (Buchignani, 1983: 81).

Parent-child conflicts with regard to individual freedom and double standards, giving greater freedom to sons than daughters is a recurring feature, and has been noted in most studies. In comparison to white Canadian youth, children of immigrant South Asian community are, to a great extent, under the control of parents.

Another study done in Saskatoon, Canada, also noted the gap between parents and children in their attitudes.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents answered that Canadian youths have "too much" freedom and the remaining considered it "adequate." Except for the families of foreign-born women, all other families showed a great deal of reluctance in
giving the same amount of freedom to their children. Interestingly, all these families maintain sex differences with respect to children's choice of friends, dating and marriage: both mothers and fathers were willing to grant more freedom to boys than to girls, and the newly migrant families held only slightly more strict attitudes than those who came in the early 60's (Siddique, 1977: 184).

The conflicts between generations in the New York area were noted by a psychiatrist, Satish Chandra Varma:

The biggest problem that Indians face here is rearing children. Dr. Varma noted that there is no dialogue between the two generations. Torn between two cultures, with parents trying hard to keep them away from the American influence of their peer group, Indian children may tend to go a step beyond their friends in an effort to 'prove' themselves, warned Dr. Varma ....He sees a "bleak future for children" unless parents consciously try to initiate a dialogue with them (Nita Shah, 1982: 37).

In a letter to *India Abroad*, a teenage girl wrote a letter to the editor expressing her frustration:

I want to speak for many Indian teenagers who are presently growing up in America. I am a 16 year old female and would like to talk about something that concerns not only me but also my Indian friends. The subject is: peers vs. friends.

We have grown up in America and have been influenced by the American culture. Yet we are expected to stick to our Indian heritage and culture; we do not have objections to this. Speaking for myself, I want to say that I love India and the Hindu religion dearly and will not give up that love.

My American friends understand and respect my culture; they know that I am going to have an arranged marriage. They have never sought to influence me in any manner but our parents do not trust our American friends. They seem to think that all American teenagers drink or take drugs.

*Knowledge Claimed*

I feel that we know right from wrong. We Indian teenagers have set a high moral standard for ourselves. It hurts us when our parents question us as if we are not capable of making sensible judgments.

*Friday Movies 'Out'*

Our parents demand us to spend all our free time at home; we cannot make a Friday night movie or go out for a pizza with a group of girls.

This hurts us since we want to be accepted by our American friends.

It is extremely difficult to make our parents understand our problems because we are accused of "talking back." We feel we have no one to talk to except our Indian friends. Our parents don't understand that we want to have great relationship with them as well as with our friends.

*A Need to be Alone*

At this stage of our lives, we like to be alone in a quiet atmosphere; so we spend a long time in our bedrooms. We are then accused by our parents that we do not want to be fully associated with the family affairs.
We will have to learn to deal with society by ourselves; why not let us begin now? I feel this would strengthen our character. We are not asking for freedom but the chance to socialize more and not having the painful feeling of being "left out" (India Abroad, 1982).

However, one can find many parents becoming quite reasonable. According to a study among Indian immigrants in Calgary, Canada, Indian parents tended to be less authoritarian and to allow greater informality in relations between children and adults; similarly parents were reluctant to impose restrictions in the choice of clothes as well as of friends. Children are generally encouraged to show initiative in contrast to the authoritarian tendency that prevails in Indian society, particularly in the rural area. Of course, one has to take into consideration the fact that most of these families have already been exposed to urban influences in India.

Some parents, however, were concerned about the lack of sufficient respect for adults. One of the mothers commented: "I have noted that youngsters in Canada do not respect adults as much as youngsters in India." The patterns of punishment show that persuasion is most often used and that affection and praise function as rewards. In general children expressed a desire for greater freedom and there appears to be more opposition to the mother than the father, perhaps because she is easier to oppose. However, the response of the child to the person making the decision in the family depends on the particular issue that is of concern to it. For example, if the father tried to restrict the allowance of the child while the mother decides what the child will eat, the father may have more influence. At least in the early socialization period, the mother is more involved in the decision-making process. Parents attribute indiscipline to a number of factors associated with the fact of living in urban Canadian society. Westernization and modernization tend to be perceived by parents as a movement away from Indian cultural norms which they consider to be ideal. They are also concerned about the impact on their children of violence on TV and peer group influence. The Indian migrant family is confronted, not unexpectedly, with the insistent demands of Westernization regarding the development of the individual personality, school education and social relationships that go in directions not to the parents' liking. The problems of the socialization of immigrant children are not confined to adolescence as is generally assumed. From the parents' point of view, there are some aspects of Westernization which are regarded as desirable (for example, material comforts) and others that are considered to be 'corrupting'. This is revealed in a comment of one of the parents: "The idea is to pick up the good habits of Canadians but at the same time not to give up decent Indian customs and replace them by undesirable norms."

Regarding the choice of occupations, there appears to be a shift from the traditional pattern of choosing a career for the children to the Canadian pattern which gives children freedom in the choice of a career, though parents consciously endeavour to influence their career aspirations. The children's responses also show that the idea of pleasing their parents does not seem to be the major determinant of occupational choice and, in the case of girls, there is an eagerness to take up careers other than being merely housewives, contrary to the traditional Indian pattern (Kurian and Ghosh, 1983: 132-133).

Comparison with Youth in India
With regard to discipline at home, the comments made by university students in India shows a general desire for more freedom without an open challenge of traditional
discipline. For comparison, some of the questions asked to Canadian youth were used in the study of youth in India in 1984. To the question whether parents are too strict, the majority, or 55 per cent, disagreed, while only 28.9 per cent agreed, and about half of the youth in Canada agreed to the question indicating the difference is not that wide. Whether too much independence for youth will lead to indiscipline, 63.5 per cent of the Indian youth disagreed which is close to the views of the Canadian youth. Whether youth have the right to live according to parents' old traditions, 52.9 per cent said yes, while in Canada 60 per cent agreed. To the statement that parents know what is best for youth, 81.8 per cent of the Indian youth agreed while the Canadian youth were unsure about this and 48.4 per cent were uncertain, showing their ambivalence living in a modern society emphasizing individual initiative. As regards caring for the parents in old age, both groups are in strong support, with 86.7 per cent of Indian youth and 77 per cent Canadian youth giving approval. Again, the difference can be accounted for by the Indian environment where caring for aging parents by children is taken for granted. As regards punishment by parents, in both groups between 70 to 95 per cent agreed that they never suffered from any extreme type of punishment and over 65 per cent felt that the parents sat down and talked things out. Interestingly, to the query, whether the points of view of the parents on many matters were alien to the youth, while 53.2 per cent of the Indian youth agreed, only 40 per cent of the Canadian youth agreed, probably due to the fact that the immigrant parents in this study are professionals and, therefore, are exposed to modern ideas and are more willing to communicate with their children. To another question, whether the parents felt that the society that they were brought up in was better than at present, 64 per cent of the Indian youth and 48.4 per cent of the Canadian youth agreed, with 29 per cent of the latter showing uncertainty. While looking specifically at the male-female differences in attitudes, the difference was minimal with about 2 to 3 per cent of females in India favouring traditional attitudes.

**Dating and Marriage**

The majority of marriages in India are arranged by parents, and the immigrant families themselves have been used to the custom of arranged marriage. However, in Canadian Society, decisions regarding marriage as well as dating become a sensitive issue for most Indian parents.

Among the socializing practices found in Western society, perhaps the most controversial for Indian parents is dating and the association of teenagers. The response that adolescents should be allowed to meet with the opposite sex under supervision is an attempt at an adjustment to a complex problem. However, some parents are clearly conservative in this regard while the teenagers themselves are very much influenced by the North American peer groups. Double standards seem to persist as regards acceptance by the parents, of dating by teenagers, with freedom for boys and severe restrictions for girls.

In the study of Fijian immigrants, the following observation was made:

Other intergenerational problems arise with children who are adolescents or young adults. Most of these arise from attempts by parents to control their children in ways that the children feel inappropriate in the Canadian context. Fijian Indian parents feel strongly that their adolescent daughters should not date, and there is a certain degree of reservation about them associating with 'Canadian' boys. In addition, there is a strong pressure for those young daughters and sons who have
lived most of their life in Fiji to marry another Fijian Indian even though it is generally acknowledged that cross-cultural difficulties often arise when these marriages are made between an immigrant and an individual straight from Fiji. Many young men reject this parental pressure and marry Canadian women.

Similarly, relative independence and a likely more thorough incorporation of Canadian culture make for a greater gulf between adult children and their parents than typically seen in Fiji. Adult children can and do set up their own households and within them defend their autonomy quite rigorously. In these contexts parent-child relationships remain strong but they are supported only by respect and friendship; dependence is rare (Buchignani, 1983: 82).

The study by Muhammad Siddique in Saskatoon, Canada, also noted some parent-child conflicts.

In our sample for instance, the families who migrated to Canada some fifteen years ago and now have India and Pakistan-born sons and daughters of marriageable age, are attempting to make an adjustment where they are accepting dating to an extent—willingly or not—and at the same time retain a major say in the final decision of marriage. Interestingly, our detailed interviews and informal discussions with the children of marriageable age show that they not only are willing to accept their parents' decision but have indicated their own personal preference to marry individuals of similar ethnicity and nationality. However, unlike some of the males, females want to marry a person of their own cultural background but who preferably have been in Canada for some time. The caste-barriers were seen unimportant by almost all the young males and females, and, an "arranged" type of marriage was generally approved if it was "initiated by the mutual consent of the boy and girl." The attitude towards dating and marriage shown by Canada-born children was somewhat different from the attitude of India and Pakistan-born (but grown-up in Canada) children even in the same family. Since the concepts of 'caste' and 'arranged marriage' are simply unknown to Canada-born children, they give high importance to "love" over any other considerations which may be of some significance to their parents. On the other hand, a great deal of reluctance is shown by India and Pakistan-born individuals—especially those who came to Canada in their 20s—to marry Canada-born individuals of second or third generation immigrants. But there is no reason to infer that such marriages (e.g. between first and second generation immigrants) are less likely to be successful (Siddique, 1977: 192-193).

Comparison with Youth in India

First of all, it is interesting to note observations made by Prakasa and Nandini Rao in two studies of university students in India:

It would appear that change is evident in many aspects of the marriage system. In general, an overwhelming majority of the students wanted more freedom in selecting a future spouse and also wanted their parents to consult them before selecting a spouse so that they can make their feelings known.

A majority of the students also indicated that they wanted to know their future spouse for some time before their marriage, instead of not having any acquaintance as was done traditionally. Throughout the study, it is evident that the liberal views are supported by the male students and the traditional ones are mainly chosen by the female students:
The evidence from the study reveals that the small family members are more likely to be liberal in their attitudes when compared to members of the large family which is in the expected direction. The students whose fathers’ income is high show more liberal attitudes in mate selection (Prakasa and Nandini Rao, 1976:450-451).

In general, the study reveals that the particularistic and universalistic attitudes toward intergroup marriages seem to be traditional. However, a small but significant number of the respondents express liberal attitudes toward intergroup marriages in terms of caste, religion, village, relatives, and nationality (Prakasa and Nandini Rao, 1980: 498).

It is interesting to compare the attitudes of youth in India with immigrant youth in India as regards the difficult problems about freedom in heterosexual relationships and arranged marriage. To the question whether parents are right in discouraging dating to avoid vulnerable situations, youth in India were somewhat divided with females more in agreement while 55 per cent of the Canadian youth agreed with this statement. It is hard to interpret this difference except that youth in India have less chance to face the problem than the immigrant youth. Whether the parents can be the best judges to decide who should be the future spouse for the youth, 66.9 per cent of the Indian youth agreed, while 60 per cent of the Canadian youth disagreed. This is a clear indication of the difference in the societies in which they live. Indian youth are still dominated by traditions while the immigrant youth are surrounded by a majority of the population who practise relative freedom in the choice of spouse. To the query, whether arranged marriage, as it is practised, is too restrictive and parents understand it, 86.5 per cent of Indian youth agreed while only 38.7 per cent of the Canadian youth agreed with 35.5 per cent undecided and 25.9 per cent disagreed. This also shows the ambivalence of Canadian youth living in a modern society.

Sometimes, one finds a rather strong reaction among the youth. On the question of arranged marriage:

Another rebellious young Canadian girl, who married a non-Indian despite her parent's objections, remarked that, "by the time my sister and I were ready to go out we would never have permitted our parents to arrange a marriage. My brother let himself be bribed into an arranged marriage. He is dumb enough for that" (Inglis and Ames, 1967:42).

**Cultural Identity**

The maintenance of cultural identity is an important concern for these families. The fact that almost all Indian parents are anxious to make their children knowledgeable in their own culture, and encourage them to visit India frequently, indicates a desire for the preservation of their distinctive culture. Attendance in cultural and religious events also reveals their considerable and continuing interest in India.

While the children appear to be greatly influenced by what their parents say, interview data and observations suggest that they experience a strong desire for acceptance by the peer group. Most of the Indian children have more Canadian than Indian friends. The peer groups exert strong pressures for 'uniformity' within the group and actual differences in achievement and status tend to be minimized. The use of language, for example, while directly related to the length of stay in
Canada, tends to be English rather than the mother tongue and English. While some children understand the mother tongue they all tend to talk in English. It is not uncommon for children to forget their mother tongue and sporadic visits to India tend to accentuate the ambiguity of their cultural situation (Kurian and Ghosh, 1983:137).

Most parents, however, are only selectively committed to a program of cultural retention. The result in some groups has been a substantial cultural loss in less than a single generation. For example, among Fijians, Guyanese, Trinidadians, and South Africans, second generation children frequently do not understand their parents’ language. They know little of the places from which their parents came and their values and beliefs are little different from those of their non-South Asian peers (Buchignani, Indra and Srivastava, 1985:162).

Conclusion

As regards the youth in India, many of the issues that are of concern in Canada have little relevance. Many of the concerns of the immigrants are the problems of adjustment in an alien culture which has no equivalent for those who live in India. Those who are in India are living in their society where they are not forced to change to be in tune with the majority. However, one should not underestimate the desire of youth for change, especially university students who represent the vanguard of modernization. While all the answers to questions to the Indian youth are not included in this paper, the general trend is towards change without serious threatening of traditions. It is always interesting for observers who visit India, including people of Indian origin who have settled abroad for many years, to find that modern communications which have opened up the world, are changing the youth in urban India at a fairly rapid pace. Therefore, this study indicates that social change not only affects immigrant youth but also youth in India. While the parents may feel the wind of change, they find it hard to adjust easily to the changing times. Perhaps, it may be even better that, while change is useful in many situations, a total break from traditions will leave the children with no cultural moorings. In the case of children brought up in Canada, parents are conscious of the value of maintaining this cultural identity. A gradual change toward modernity will be less disturbing for society. One might as well look at the rate of accelerated change in Western Society, where the parents find it hard to keep up with the latest in material and non-material changes of society, and at times get into situations where their own emotional and psychological stability may be affected.

Members of the younger generation, including those that are born in India and those who are born in Canada, have less difficulty in adapting to Canadian society. Many have friends among immigrants of European descent. While the problem of identity in modern society is a concern for first generation immigrants, the process may be much easier for those of the second and third generation. However, in most parts of North America, many of the younger generation are taking an active interest in some aspects of the South Asian culture, namely, classical music and dancing. It will be interesting to see whether this interest will survive the test of time, say, in the third generation.

The parents who came as immigrants in the early sixties are faced with the reality of dealing with twenty year old sons and daughters who want to associate freely with the opposite sex. As there are not a sufficient number of people in the
South Asian community for them to develop heterosexual friendships, it is inevitable that quite a few of them have friends from other ethnic groups. A few wish to get married, and some parents are accepting the seriousness of these relationships. A majority of the parents are still hesitant to allow their sons and, especially, daughters, to have heterosexual relationships which might lead to marriage. In many cases, the parents discourage their daughters from dating non-Indian young men. On the other hand, there are quite a significant number of sons and daughters who like to have freedom of choice in marriage within their ethnic community.

Eventually, inter-ethnic marriages will be accepted as a matter of course by the third generation, like the Japanese who have been in North America several decades longer than the South Asians.

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NOTE The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundary... Equally important is to promote intergenerational solidarity and collaboration, and ensure gender equality in family, community and society at large. Influence of Urban Women in Family Buying Behavior-A Study with Special Reference to Kochi in Kerala, India. @inproceedings{Anilkumar2014InfluenceOU, title={Influence of Urban Women in Family Buying Behavior-A Study with Special Reference to Kochi in Kerala, India}, author={Nishtha Anilkumar and Jelsey Joseph and Hidayat Nagar}, year={2014} }. Nishtha Anilkumar, Jelsey Joseph, Hidayat Nagar. Several factors influence the consumer behavior of women as a consumer of goods purchased for common family use/consumption. Both internal and external aspects influence the consumer in the market. In the context of family lives, intergenerational transmission refers to the movement, passage, or exchange of some good or service between one generation and another. What is transmitted may be intangible and include beliefs, norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors specific to that family, or that reflect sociocultural, religious, and ethnically relevant practices and beliefs. Intergenerational transmission can, however, also include the provision of resources and services or assistance by one generation to another. One example of this, illustrated by Barry McPherson (1998) is the issue of tr