



CULTURAL CONTEXTS

in Mental Health Services

A publication of United Cultures of Canada Association



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and Rochelle Major, Ph.D.

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The purpose of this book is to provide reliable cultural information to mental health practitioners in Canada and it is solely based on community input.

To gather community input, we engaged eight facilitators who went out to their ethnic communities. Each interviewed at least ten individuals from diverse backgrounds that included professionals, homemakers, recent immigrants and refugees, foreign-born Canadian citizens, people of all ages and genders. Thus, the input from over one hundred community members has been used for the development of this collection. Occasionally, some research has also been used to fill the gaps in the information, but for the most part, what readers

see here is what we have heard, recorded as accurately as possible.

In essence, this book embodies communities' collective reflection of how they see and interpret their culture and would prove a reliable primer for psychologists who work with clients from different cultural backgrounds. It will be important to note that while the majority of the respondents believed that intervening psychologists should have an understanding of the clients' cultural background, many thought that if a psychologist follows professional standards and meets a client with genuine respect and openness, they would be just as effective.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our contributors for these valuable insights and hope that mental health professionals would feel assisted by this endeavour in their incredibly challenging work.

Board

United Cultures of Canada Association

Introduction

Data from the most recent national Census indicated that Canada is leading the G7 countries in population growth, with an average population increase of 1.0% per year (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Currently, over 35 million people call Canada home (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Among the Canadian provinces, Alberta, which includes within it two of Canada's top five largest urban municipalities, Calgary and Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2017b), has the fastest population growth rate of 11.6% (Statistics Canada, 2017a). For example, since the last Census, Edmonton witnessed close to a 34% increase in individuals who do not speak either of Canada's official languages, attesting to the increasing diversity of its population (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

The majority of Canada's and Alberta's population growth (i.e., two-thirds) is due to migratory flows into the country, rather than to natural population increases that occur when birth rates exceed death rates (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Migration flows into the country are a response to both pull factors prompting people to immigrate in search of a better life, and push factors related to the global humanitarian crisis that has left record numbers of individuals and families displaced. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017) reported that 66.5 million people have been forced out of their homelands in response to war and armed conflicts. To respond to the need for refugee assistance, Canada has increased its commitment to refugee resettlement by taking in larger numbers of refugees than in previous years, as well as through an expansion of existing refugee categories to allow compassionate Canadians to partner with the government in meeting its humanitarian

goals (Government of Canada, 2016). The result of population changes due to migration is the intermixing of peoples of diverse races, cultures, religions, identities, worldviews, life histories, and migration trajectories.

Canada's multicultural policies encourage newcomers to retain their heritage culture and identities, while simultaneously integrating into the surrounding community and society, and expect other Canadians to express tolerance and acceptance towards newcomers in their new host country (Berry, 2006). However, we know from recent events across North America, including in Canada (such as the shooting at the Quebec Mosque and widespread rallies organized by racist and anti-immigration groups), that interracial, interreligious, and inter-cultural tensions are on the rise. It seems that more and more people are finding it difficult to understand and accept the different cultures, religions, worldviews, or identities of the "other." Of utmost importance in the present sociopolitical climate is the ability of the mental health service provider to bridge cultural, racial, religious, identity, and worldview divides. The mental health service provider is the person approached to support those who have experienced physical and emotional suffering, through life's difficulties and hardships, as well as through repression of their identities, racism, discrimination, and various types of human rights violations before or after migration. Chung and Bemak (2012) argue for an expanded role for the mental health service provider when working with immigrant and refugee populations, where the person serves as a systems navigator, bridging the gap in clients' knowledge of how host society systems work and can be accessed (such as health and

mental health care services, schooling, legal/justice system, transportation, and financial systems), and facilitating their direct service connection.

Unfortunately, like the general public, the barriers mental health professionals face in being able to serve, understand, value, and support their clients in culturally responsive ways are many-fold, such as: (a) language barriers, financial barriers, or transportation and child care barriers that make mental health services inaccessible; (b) different conceptions about health and healing in Eastern worldviews and the Western Euro-centric worldview that forms the basis of the mental health professions; (c) cultural stigma related to mental health problems and seeking help for them; (d) clients' past experiences of racism or human rights violations by other authority figures that shape present helping relationships, etc.; and (e) the sometimes limited relevance of interventions focused on internal factors within the person (e.g., cognitions, emotions, or behaviours), when there is a clear need for environmental change or support to remove systemic barriers (Chung & Bemak, 2012; Ibrahim & Heuer, 2016; Sue & Sue, 2016)

In his seminal work, Hwang (2006) argued that in order to be responsive to culturally diverse populations, to provide services that are culturally appropriate or relevant, and to remove barriers to their access to and ability to benefit from mental health interventions, mental health services must be adapted for each client group served to take into account the group's unique experiences, needs, beliefs about health and healing, treatment expectations, and level of acculturation into the surrounding society. He proposed a model for adapting mental health services called the Psychotherapy Adaptation and Modification Framework. The framework identifies six do-

main in which mental health service provision needs to be adapted for each culturally diverse client group:

1. Dynamic issues and cultural complexities – plan counselling taking into account the client's self-identified multiple identities (e.g., ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, sexual orientation).
2. Orientation – orient clients to the counselling process in a way that makes it relevant to their cultural or religious framework or worldview (e.g., mind-body connection, holistic healing), and incorporate psychoeducation into your treatment.
3. Cultural Beliefs - a) relate counselling concepts to what is relevant or valued in the client's culture and the predominant ways of healing in that culture, or consider using cultural brokers to map onto clients' explanatory models of their presenting concerns; b) consider ways of incorporating cultural/religious methods of healing and community strengths into your intervention process or "aligning" Western methods of intervention with the clients' cultural worldviews.
4. Client-therapist relationship – be flexible in structuring the counselling relationship to align with client expectations, such as using a formal doctor-patient type relationship for clients who prefer to seek help from trusted authority figures, or a more egalitarian relationship among those who come from cultures that are collateral or less hierarchical in their social organization.
5. Cultural differences in expression and communication of mental health issues should be recognized and taken into account.
6. Address cultural issues of salience: a) the unique ways shame and stigma play out for the specific cultural/religious group; b) push and pull factors the client may feel in relation to holding onto the heritage culture

versus adapting to Canadian culture; and c) the unique post-migration or environmental stressors he/she is currently facing, like employment barriers, racism or discrimination, or differences in family members' rates of acculturation in the host society, that may require environmental or systemic intervention.

In order to gain a better understanding of which specific adaptations to make in each of these domains, mental health service providers need to conduct a thorough assessment of their clients' identities, beliefs, cultural, family, and community backgrounds, supports, and help-seeking experiences/expectations. Best practice recommendations suggest using the DSM V Cultural Formulation Interview (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as a guide in this assessment process. The Cultural Formulation Interview contains four key categories of questions. The first is Cultural Definition of the Problem. The mental health service provider elicits the reasons for clients coming to see him/her, with follow-up inquiries focusing on how the reasons, challenges, stressors, or problems would be framed, understood, or described from his/her own cultural or religious vantage point, as if being described to a community member or family member. Furthermore, the client is asked about what troubles him/her most about the problem or issue, in order to understand the impact of the presenting problem in the client's own cultural context (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The second category of questions is called Cultural Perceptions of Cause, Context and Support. In this set of questions, the mental health service provider enquires about what clients think is happening to them and what is causing this. The general nature of the inquiry

about what is happening to them, instead of about how they are feeling, thinking or acting, aims to yield culturally relevant expressions of distress (such as spiritual manifestations of the problem or physical components of the problem among people from cultures that emphasize the mind-body connection). This method of inquiry also elicits beliefs about health and healing and the etiology or explanatory model of the present problem in the client's cultural worldview. Clients are also asked about any types of support in their lives that make the problem better, and about any stressors, life challenges, or other factors that make the problem worse. They are also more specifically asked about their background or identities, which aspects of those identities are most important to them, and how these relate to the presenting problem, if at all. Background and identities are defined very broadly in the Cultural Formulation Interview, including the communities the client belongs to, languages spoken, country of origin, race or ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation, assuming that everyone holds multiple identities, and that different aspects of one's identity may be salient in relation to different presenting problems (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The third category of questions is Cultural Factors Affecting Self-Coping and Past Help-seeking. Helping professionals are encouraged to ask about what the client has done to cope with the problem/challenge/stressor and how it has worked, what other types of help the person has sought out from various sources, like various types of doctors, healers, religious leaders, their community, as well as which types of help they found most and least useful. The final category of questions is Cultural Factors Affecting Current Help-seeking. Inquiries in this category investigate the cli-

ent's expectations of the present help-seeking attempt with the mental health service provider, in terms of what type of help would be most useful to them at this time and what other types of help significant others (like family members, community members, or religious leaders) have suggested they seek for the problem and how they feel about this (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

This important book provides mental health service providers with the critical cultural information they need to know about the backgrounds, identities, experiences, traditions, worldviews, and beliefs about mental health and healing of some of the most highly represented cultural groups in Alberta and in Canada. It also provides strategies for build-

ing helping relationships, reducing barriers, and implementing interventions that are most consistent with their ethnic, religious, and cultural worldviews. The book is expected to become a critical resource for mental health professionals across fields such as social work, counselling, psychology, and psychiatry, in their attempts to move towards ethical, culturally responsive, and effective practice for the diverse peoples that call Alberta and Canada home.

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Latino Canadians

My Community

Traditionally, the name Latino is used to refer to “a person from the Caribbean, South or Central America, or other Spanish or Portuguese cultures or origins regardless of race” (“Hispanic,” n.d.). For Statistics Canada, Latin Americans, Latin Canadians or Latino Canadians are descendents or persons of Latin America and comprise 1.2% of the total population of Canada according to the 2011 Census. The largest Latino American immigrant groups in Canada are (beginning with the most numerous) Mexican Canadians, Colombian Canadians, and Salvadorian Canadians. The majority of Latin American Canadians arrived in the late 20th century from El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, and Guatemala, along with smaller communities from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua, and all other Latin American countries (“Latin American Canadians,” n.d.).

There are many reasons why Latinos immigrate to Canada, including economic opportunities, fleeing civil wars or political oppression, escaping from dictatorships, revolutions, drug wars, violence, and communism or socialism in their native countries. Latin immigration to Canada started in the 1970s because of revolutions, such as those in Chile and Central America. According to the 2011 census, 381,280 people from Latin America lived in Canada, of whom 41,305 lived in Alberta and 14,530 in Edmonton. Sixty-two percent of the Latino population is foreign-born. Recent numbers show that more than 5,000 Latino immigrants arrived from the Americas in the years 2011 to 2016 (Lindsay, 2001).

Ninety-five percent of Latin Canadians speak Spanish and Portuguese. Almost all Canadians of Latin American origin can speak at least one official language, though not fluently. Only 6% of respondents reported they could not speak either official language. More than 40% of Latin American Canadians speak Spanish at home. Religion for Latino Canadians is important. About 70% of them are Catholic, 13% are Protestants 13%, and 10% follow other religions. Most Latinos who immigrate to Canada have a university degree; many have a master’s degree or a doctorate from their country of origin. Latinos are educated people who come to Canada looking for new opportunities for themselves and especially for their children.

Unfortunately, in Canada Latinos are usually found working as labourers or in sales, construction, landscaping and service jobs; just around 6% have management positions. Their income is low in comparison to that of the overall Canadian population. Canadians of Latin American origin are more likely than other people to have incomes that fall below Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Cut-Offs. Children of Latin American origin living in low-income families and seniors of Latin American origin, living on their own, are especially likely to have low incomes.

Most Latino Canadians have reported some discrimination and racism against them. However, no matter how much struggle their lives involve, Latin Canadians have a great sense of belonging to Canada, to a point where it surpasses their sense of belonging to their

cultural or ethnic group. They are very active in Canadian society. High percentages exercise their voting rights in national elections

and participate in sport or faith organizations (Lindsay, 2001).

Immigration and After

There are many reasons why Latinos emigrate from their countries. It is important to note that emigration to a different country is an incredibly difficult decision; one must leave his/her past behind as well as loved ones and financial security. Emigrants should mentally and financially prepare for an uncertain and insecure future. There are many immigrant-accepting countries in the world where people can seek to start a new life. But when Latinos decide to immigrate to Canada, it is because they are looking for a better future not just for themselves but for their children and future generations. Latinos immigrate to Canada for many reasons, depending on the country where they live. Reasons to flee include: to escape from violence, poverty, from governmental abuse, from guerrillas, the cartels and drug wars, and other social-economic problems in these Third World countries. Other reasons are better educational and career prospects, sports opportunities, temporary work and job opportunities, and Canada's unparalleled healthcare system.

After applying for a visa, applicants need to wait for some time for the decision on their application. It is a matter of months in the case of work visas. If one is looking for a skilled worker visa, this wait time can extend up to two years or longer. This is a time when one is waiting every day to have an answer. One already may be mourning what one may have to leave behind if an immigrant visa is granted. Nevertheless, hope and prayer for the success of the application does not stop.

A further challenge is added if one must immigrate without one's close family, children, or spouse. After arriving, there is an immediate need to look for a place to live as one settles, starts learning or improving one's English, looking for a job, as well as buying clothes for the weather which is totally different from the weather back home. One must learn how to walk to the bus stop in the cold without freezing, and how to take the bus or LRT. Newcomers must study for a driver's license and wait for two or three months until it is granted. Finding the right school for children and for oneself also are on the list of urgent items.

Seventy percent of the respondents said that they are satisfied with their actual jobs and salaries. It took some time to find them, but they made it. The other 30% found that their degrees were not recognized and so it was not possible for them to achieve their goals. It was heart-breaking for them to realize that even their university degrees could not secure a decent job for them. These people work as labourers, grocery store attendants or at fast-food chains, places where their Canadian-born counterparts would start their working lives. They find themselves trapped in meaningless jobs and feel sad and confused: "Our knowledge was valued when we applied for our visa but after arriving, what we know is useless. We are very well trained and with a high qualification for nothing."

Some respondents felt that there was not even a possibility of upgrading their educational qualifications. The only option they

had was to start all over again. They explain, “To be accepted in any college or university you must meet the English language or other entrance requirements. But I must earn an income to support my family. If you work, there is no time to improve your skills. There are family and financial responsibilities blocking your way. Thanks to the economy we can live with our salaries and can carry on without going back to our native countries. We are lucky to have health coverage provided by the Province and extra coverage from our employers.”

Eighty percent of Latinos continue speaking Spanish at home, while the other 20% speak English, which includes Latinos who are

married to an English-speaking partner. Latinos try to have their children speak Spanish at home so they do not forget this important part of their roots. Most of the respondents lack proficiency in English, which is particularly noticeable when they are outside the home. Their level of English allows them to function in everyday life but proves insufficient to accomplish specialized tasks such as meeting a lawyer, buying a house, going to a health specialist, and so on. Participants were keenly aware of the fact that coming to Canada without any language skills (as may be the lot of some refugees) is a terrible situation.

Culture

The Latino Canadian community is very diverse. Latinos do not come from one country but from an entire continent that has more than 18 Spanish-speaking countries and another one that has Portuguese as its official language. To feel connected to their ethnic culture is not as easy as we may think. Latinos from all the Americas share the same history in terms of their struggles regarding bureaucracy and government; they are all from Third World countries, living with a long history of violence. At the same time, Latinos have different ancestors and native communities that make them feel distinct from each other.

The respondents in this project came from five different countries: Peru, Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, and Venezuela. For them, the most important thing is to stay connected to their friends and family by phone or social media. They enjoy having friends in Canada from their culture or country of origin, although it does not make up for the loss of their friends and family back home. All the

participants (100%) felt that it is very important not to lose their language or traditions and believe that all Latinos should teach these to their children. They are not ashamed to let Canadians know who they are and what they used to do back home.

The young adults interviewed have changed their way of thinking, of seeing the world. They are more open to new experiences and to the attitudes of Canadians. They are less closed-minded about new cultures, clothes, a way of dressing, foods, religions, and different perspectives. For them, it is easy to respect and value differences. Latino adults came with more prejudices, with a way of judging and thinking about others that are quite a challenge to change and will take some time to adjust. In Latin American countries, so much violence is due to the non-acceptance of people who do not fit into the value or belief systems that others believe to be proper or correct.

Latinos find Canadian parenting style too permissive, especially with young children.

Parents feel that Latino children get out of their parent's hands after arriving in Canada because of peer pressure. A respondent said, "We need to continue with the discipline we use to have back home. We need our kids to be independent but not go crazy with the freedom they get here. It is difficult to let a child leave home as early as 16 and start their lives on their own." However, they all agreed that nothing in Canada is so different from their culture as to make them feel uncomfortable. All participants believed that they have achieved a balance between the two cultures and are well-adjusted to living in this country. They are not afraid that their children may lose their culture. The Latino values are not very different from Canadian values; this will keep their children safe.

Social Environments

Latinos are individualistic but also family-centered. They stay in touch with their extended families and take care of them as much as they can. After arriving in Canada, they try to find people of their culture and native countries, but they fare well even without these connections and are happy to spend time with their co-workers, neighbours, or their children's friends. There is no Hispanic or Latino Community Centre to attend in Edmonton. The project participants said that they try to be involved with their children's school, sports, and church, but that will be all. Forty percent of the respondents said that they had participated in an organization such as a sports team or a church in the past 12 months. They also try to enjoy recreational centres and other outdoor activities and events. They do not visit these places to get involved with their ethnic community.

Thirty percent of the project participants felt that they had faced discrimination. Twenty

Differences between the two education systems also confuses Latino communities. Back home, people acquire professional status by doing one university degree. In Canada, one requires several credentials. For example, people first need to do a bachelor's degree to get into a professional program and then do another degree to become a medical doctor, a psychologist, a nurse, lawyer, etc.

Latinos are very proud of their culture and their ancestors. They highly value and respect their elders and expect their children to be respectful to their parents and other adults. Latinos like to dress well. They are good dancers and very well educated. Their language, music, and food exhibit the richness of this culture, which is well recognized by Canadians.

percent said they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment due to their ethnicity, color, race, religion, language, or accent. They thought the discrimination was a result of the stereotype people have about Latinos and their countries. For example, people have asked them for drugs because they are Latinos, or refused to have a conversation with them because they come from violence-torn countries. Latinos are also ignored because of their lack of fluency in English. "People don't try to understand us or help us understand what they say; they just ignore us."

They explained how hurt they felt because of cultural stereotypes of Latinos as drug dealers, thieves, guerrillas, or as dumb or underdeveloped. This lowered their self-esteem. Being ignored at work due to racial profiling simply forces them to remain distant from their co-workers. But they also said that this is not something that occurs often. The respondents

felt that once people get to know Latinos, they usually understand them. The respondents who felt discriminated against said that these behaviours were hurtful in the beginning, but they gradually learned to ignore it. A young respondent explained how he filed a complaint about the discrimination at his school. However, he was disappointed when no action was taken on it. He said that students like him learn to live with those situations; they just ignore what is happening and try to focus on their studies and work.

However, both ethnic and mainstream media

play a significant role in breaking down their isolation. Participants said that they watch Canadian TV and hear Canadian radio. Sixty percent use the internet or an ethnic channel to watch information about their countries or Spanish programs. All participants knew that it would not be easy to start life in a new country and yet they feel satisfied with their decision to immigrate to Canada: "We are happy living in this country, and we feel safe where we live. We choose our neighbourhood and what to do in Canada to a certain extent. We are happy that our kids can grow and live a better life in Canada."

Family

In their home countries, Latinos are used to living in a small family of parents and children with extended family not too far away. Adult children generally stay at their parents' home until they marry and quite often until they find a good job, buy a house, and move out with their spouse. Parents like to have them home, and children like to stay home. It is a win-win situation.

Latinos count on the extended family for raising children and helping with household chores, such as shopping. They celebrate their festivals and other events with the extended family. When grandparents are old, or one of them passes away and the surviving spouse cannot support him or herself, they usually are welcomed into their children's homes. Such parents often do not settle in any one house but visit and spend time with all their children. All children will welcome them and support them as best as possible. They do not go to live alone or in a nursing/seniors home.

It is very important for Latinos to have the support of their extended families, especially because of the emotional bonds these families

bring. When they move to a different country, leaving behind their extended families, it is a very trying time emotionally, leaving them to contend with the loss of some of the things that they hold dearest as well as an incredible amount of loneliness. It is great to have extended family in Canada. They can help immigrants settle in and offer them substantial support in starting a new life. But 70% of the respondents do not have any extended family in Canada.

Extended families are so important in a Latino society that young children who come to Canada and are separated from their extended family cannot understand what their parents mean by "having a family." Older children often want to go back to have the love and warmth that they got from their extended family, which even their parents cannot offer to them. However, it is very difficult for immigrants to visit families and friends back home, especially in the first few years, when they are still struggling to find a well-paid job. This is because airfares to Latin American countries are very expensive. If there is no refugee sta-

tus involved and there is enough money to pay for airplane tickets, they look forward to going back home to meet their friends and family.

Another important aspect of life in Latino countries is the strong sense of machismo (strong or aggressive masculine pride that is exercised by men to dominate women). At home, the father/husband has the last word when making important decisions. This strong sense of machismo is more pronounced in people who lack certain levels of education. In families where the wife is educated, has a degree and a job, it is not as strong. All household chores are the responsibility of the wife or mother.

There is a lot of respect for elders in Latino communities. They also have the freedom to decide what they want to do in their own homes. It is not usual for grandchildren to be raised by and receive orders from grandparents. Parents are the ones who have the responsibility to teach and raise them. If there are siblings, the older may have more “power” over the rest, but it is just to help parents. In the family, the machismo is apparent in the way that sons will have some power over their female siblings.

Children are expected to work hard, focus on their studies, and prepare for a better life in the future when they can settle with their family in their own house. Parents expect their children to respect their wishes as parents, help with chores, study well, and (if the children are working) to contribute financially. Parenting styles differ from strict to lenient in our community, but generally, parents do not force their wishes upon their children about whom to marry, what to study, or what to do with their lives. Many parents help their children financially with their post-secondary education.

Being a family-oriented society, Latinos in Canada dream about bringing their parents and siblings to Canada. They are very happy to sponsor them, assuming all financial obligations associated with the sponsorship. Every year, thousands of Latinos apply to sponsor their family members under family re-unification or other suitable immigration programs. Many project participants reported that they send money on a regular basis to help family back home. Even though many do not have great jobs, they still find ways to save up part of their income to support their loved ones in their home countries.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Latin American marriages and marital relationships are closer to what we see in Canadian families. For the Latino community, because of its traditions, marriages are a voluntary decision to be taken by the young people and not imposed by parents or family. One can choose a partner from one’s own culture or from another culture. There is no issue about interracial marriages. Couples can live together without a wedding ceremony. However, in general, Latinos are a still a little conservative

about this issue and prefer a civil or religious marriage to living-in relationships. Latino children are not expected to date at a very young age. Dating in adolescents is common. Young people generally get married in their mid-20s or later, but it is not uncommon to see younger children living together.

Parents do not arrange marriages for their children or force a partner on them. The laws in Latino countries, just like Canadian laws, clearly specify this. If parents do not like a

spouse that their children have chosen for themselves, there is nothing they can do about it. It may create some distance in the parent-child relationship, but that would be all. In olden days, parents were able to refuse to pass on the inheritance to their children in such situations, but this is not legal anymore.

As far as marital conflicts, break-up, or divorce are concerned, they happen in the Latino community for the same reasons as in Canada – financial problems, infidelity, not enough time spent with the family, and significant differences in parenting styles. However, there is no stigma attached to divorce or a break-up. It is a very sad situation for the family, for the couple, and for the children, though. Back home, the extended family will offer enormous support in such unfortunate situations and help with raising children and other needs. Here in Canada, a break-up is a very difficult situation in the Latino community because there is no extended family to help.

Children and Youth

As previously stated, the Latino community is proud of its family-centric culture. Parents invest themselves to the best of their abilities in raising a loving family that has responsible and educated children. Boys and girls are treated equally and encouraged and supported to study and work. But Latinos are usually gentler with daughters and “rougher” with sons. Also, it is more common for Latinos to train their daughters than their sons to do household chores, whereas sons enjoy more independence than the daughters.

In Latin American countries it is very common to pay for the education of all children regardless of their gender if the family can afford it. Parents will generally support their children

Many times, because of the notion of *machismo*, Latino wives suffer in silence the abuse from their partners. In some cases, if the wife has not upgraded her skills or does not have a job, she is afraid of a divorce because of the financial issues and uncertainty about whether the courts will allow her the custody of her child.

Women are not blamed by the community for the marriage breakdown. On the contrary, the community will do their best to support them in cases of break-up or divorce. It is believed in the Latin culture that women work harder and contribute more to support the well-being of the entire family and to keep all the members happy. Many of them sacrifice their careers and their financial security for their families. Women are not burdened with more responsibility for avoiding marital conflicts or more blame for avoiding the break-up. Instead, in the Latino communities, they are considered the cornerstone of a happy and better home.

financially even if it means taking loans and using up their credit so that the children can study and obtain a university degree or a technical certificate. For Latinos, the most precious gift that they can give to their children is education. Good education is the foundation of a good life and an assurance of a good future. It is the ultimate means to get ahead in life, to have a good job, and a life full of contentment.

Latino parents in Canada worry a lot about their children. The uncertainty of their future after immigration, finding a good school for them, being able to afford the cost of their education, the values that children learn, the dangers of drugs and gangs, the influence of bad company – these are some of their concerns.

Latino parents are involved as much as possible in their children's education. They can give advice to their children about a career path, but never impose their decisions on their children. Many others just let the children choose their path. Issues like school uniforms, mixed classes, and sex education do not bother Latino parents as they also were exposed to them in their home countries.

The main worries of Latino parents about their adolescent children relate to their education, their career choices, and their company. Parents try to advise children about how to choose friends, sex, staying safe from drugs, alcohol, and bullying. Parent-child relationships in the Latino community are close. Eighty percent of parents are or feel strongly connected to their children, although some 30% of the younger generation of Latino children do not feel that they have the same kind of connection with their parents.

Latino children in Canada may suffer from low self-esteem because of feeling excluded. For the first time in their lives they may experience harassment, racism, and discrimination because of their physical appearance. They may also feel embarrassed because of their parents' language and meaningless jobs, their accent, their countries of origin, and culture. However, they are strongly supported by their family when facing such struggles. Reasons for dropping out of school may be drugs, pregnancy, work and making money, or because they really do not like to study at all. The survey participants do not relate to this situation.

Status of Women

In Latin America, the situation of women has been improving in the past several years with the access they have to post-secondary

Most respondents said that they would like to know if their children identified themselves as LGBTQ and thought that they would not be judgmental. They said that they would never force these children into a heterosexual marriage. They think it will be hard to understand them in the beginning because there are many prejudices in Latin American countries against sexual minorities who are often not accepted by society. However, they would still support their children.

In rare instances, children may be seen making personal sacrifices for other family members at the expense of their personal goals. As is common in some other cultures, Latino children respect their parents and other elders, but they do not accept what is imposed on them without regard to their opinions, feelings, and emotions. Respect for parents and other family members should not be exhibited at the expense of their identity. There are basic rules for children to observe if they live with their parents, but these rules do not include an unquestioning obedience.

Latino children try to keep some of the cultural values and heritage of their parents. These include language, respect and love for family and friends, Latino food, and commitment to hard work. What they want to change are the prejudices their parents might have. For example, some Latinos may judge others negatively by their way of dressing, piercings or tattoos; they may not accept LGBTQ people and those who do not look like Latinos.

education and their ability to do better jobs. In the past, women used to stay at home and take care of the family. They did not have

any financial independence and would suffer in silence if their partner was abusive toward them. During the mid-20th century, they could vote and began to be considered independent of their fathers and husbands. They are now equal in status with men, but they do not receive equal employment benefits or salaries. The written law upholds the equality of all humans, but in practice, men are valued more and considered higher in status than women. Women are always considered the ones who take care of family and raise the children. *Machismo* is still very prevalent in Latino culture and families.

As stated earlier, Latinos are gentler with girls than with boys. When parents play with a female child, they are not as rough as when they play with a male child. Participants are also careful with their vocabulary and would not use profanity or swear words in the presence of women and girls. Latino parents give less independence to girls during childhood and adolescence to keep them safe from predators or bad influences. They expect girls to help their mothers at home with the daily chores. Girls are seen as delicate people to be protected. Latinos have more prejudices, but after arriving in Canada, they are more relaxed with their daughters. They feel that girls are safer here. As they do with their sons, Latino-Canadian parents encourage their daughters to freely participate in sports, look for better educational or career opportunities, awards, scholarships, and to increase their knowledge.

Earlier, men made all the important family decisions. This still happens in homes where both partners have less education. But when both husband and wife are educated, they share the rights and the responsibilities. For Latino women in Canada, there is no conflict between taking care of their family and

fulfilling their individual aspirations. Wives are allowed to study, to upgrade their degrees, and can share the same responsibilities in all matters. Men regard them as equals and share household work with them. Women have the freedom to travel, to make friends, or to date. They are expected to avoid dangerous activities that will harm them, but there is no such thing as family shame because of their actions.

Latino Canadian women work and help with family finances unless they are taking care of small children. Women work more in sales, healthcare, hospitality, teaching, and cleaning whereas men work in harsher environments and also do more physical labour. More men than women work in technical and skilled jobs that require higher levels of education such as surgeons, company CEOs, politicians, and highly-valued and -respected positions.

Latino Canadian women have their own bank accounts and usually have access to the family income. They know about family finances or investments and are joint owners of family properties, shares, and other assets. They make financial decisions and spend their income the way they wish. However, they share such decisions with their spouses or partners if they are married or living in common-law relationships. Some Latino women who never worked in their country may have joined the workforce in Canada. The self-esteem of these women increases as does their sense of equality with their partners.

Women have the right to select a partner of their choice and have the freedom to decide when and with whom to have a family. After marrying in their countries or in Canada, they do not have to obey the husband's family. Women try to maintain harmony at home, but if this does not work, they can look for separation or divorce. It is common for women to make more sacrifices for the family such as

staying at home and sacrificing their careers for children and parents, but they are not forced to do so. It is their choice, and they make such decisions based on the financial situation of the family.

If Latino women have an abusive spouse, but they are not financially independent or well educated, they may suffer silently. However, this is becoming less common now. Such women seek help from their friends and family. If they are in Canada and do not have a support network, they look for help from dif-

ferent agencies, even through the courts and police. The community is very supportive in these cases and will try to help in holding the abuser to account. Sometimes the husband's male friends will help the abuser and give the wife a hard time. Thanks to Canadian authorities and agencies ready to help, life is a little easier for abused Latino women in Canada. Women's social status is not compromised by divorce or break-up because no stigma is attached to separation or divorce.

Religion

Latin American countries are very religious, and most Latinos identify themselves as Catholic or simply as Christians. Some Latinos living in Canada are very religious, but there are others who do not care much for these matters. The main belief for Christians and Catholics is to love God and one another. They are expected to pray, to be good to their neighbours, or in other words, to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The ultimate reward for living life in this way is to go to heaven and be with God. Conversely, there will be a punishment at the end of their lives if this path is not followed.

Some important religious practices for a Latino are attending church on Sundays, receiving the sacraments and communion and repenting for their sins. They combine spiritual beliefs with their daily lives, living as preached in the Gospels and living up to what was said and taught by Jesus. They try to interact in this way with everyone – co-workers, friends, family, even strangers. They try to help each other as much as they can. One good place to meet such Latinos is at Spanish Catholic churches.

Catholics and Christians, in general, perceive illness as a spiritual opportunity. Some may see illness as a punishment, but those who are very religious embrace it as an opportunity to grow in faith and get closer to God. They see it as a part of life. Religion and spirituality can contribute to people living a healthier life if they follow Jesus' teachings. Religiously-minded Latinos believe that they must hold high moral standards for the good of their family and themselves; they must be God's temple. Christians and Catholics may use alternative medicine, such as acupuncture or homeopathy, but some priests do not approve of such practices as yoga or reiki. Many Catholic Latinos have been exposed to other religious practices in Canada and have either changed their religion or have abandoned religious practices overall.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

When Latinos arrive in Canada, they are just happy to have the opportunity to be in this country. They hope that all will be as they had expected, or even better, but this is not the case sometimes. The stress of immigration, harsh winters, of finding suitable work or any work at all, and many other trying circumstances take a toll on their mental health. It is sad that people often feel ashamed of being depressed or anxious instead of taking better care of their health or seeking help. Sometimes, they do not even realize that they have a problem.

If friends and family are present, they can point out these issues. However, there still is a stigma attached to mental health. Especially Latino men think that counselling or other mental health services are only meant for “crazy people.” Many men will not access these services due to their Macho pride. It may take time for them to agree to go for a consultation and even if they decide to go, they doubt if it can be of any help to them. But these are extreme cases. Generally, once the first step – recognition of the illness – has been taken, Latinos will be grateful to the Canadian health-care system for medication or therapy to help with a mental health problem.

While working with a therapist regarding a mental health issue, clients need to be reassured of a respectful and trusting relationship with the therapist. They will expect their counsellors to be open-minded, ready to listen, and interested to know about their traditions and culture. The counsellors must exhibit interest and patience to learn about their clients’ past without interrupting them. Latinos need to be

sure, just like everyone else, that if a counsellor is not able to help, they can be referred to a psychiatrist or some other specialist who can help. Clients do not want their counsellor to judge them.

Possible barriers to receiving mental health counselling are language, culture, and prejudices on the part of the therapist or the client. Clients may need the services of an interpreter if they do not speak English. However, the presence an interpreter can also become a barrier, because clients may not be as open as needed with their counsellor. Other factors that may affect counselling are the age and sex of the counsellor.

Most of the respondents believed that it is important that counsellors learn about their client’s cultural background even in advance, since they will not understand where the clients’ issues are coming from otherwise. Differences in beliefs and customs may cause counsellors to misinterpret clients’ issues, or misjudge their situations or their response to these situations. They will not appreciate situations that have arisen mainly because of a cultural issue. As a result, they will end up losing the client’s trust, without which effective counselling cannot take place (or, they may end up losing the client). Conversely, a few respondents believed that cultural knowledge is not needed at all for counselling if counsellors follow ethical standards. A few even thought that it can actually be counterproductive and result in biases and prejudices against the client.

Respondents also said that counsellors can address their specific and relevant culture-related questions to their clients directly. The

clients would not consider it rude at all and would be happy to educate their counsellor. Families follow cultural beliefs and traditions differently and clients may be the best source of reliable cultural information as it applies to their situation. In general, the knowledge that may help a counsellor to understand a client's background relates to family traditions; interactions between members of society (such as men and women and elders and youth); religious practices and economic/social status; actions that might be deemed shameful or a crime in their culture; and other such issues.

Some family or intimate personal matters are not very easy to discuss. Sixty percent of those interviewed said they would be hesitant in telling everything to a therapist even when assured that their conversation was confidential. People who are shy may find it even more challenging to discuss such information. The most difficult topics for Latinos are those relating to sex life, sexual orientation, and past traumatic experiences. As noted earlier, the main concern of the group was the counsellor's inability to understand them: why they acted in a certain way in a particular situation, or why they think or do what they think or do. However, all agreed that as counselling progresses and it becomes clear that such information is critical to a meaningful intervention, they would not hesitate to disclose it despite their discomfort or initial reluctance.

When Latinos arrive in a therapist's office, it is important that the therapist already have some information about their culture. If the clients are not comfortable even from that first greeting, it will be extremely difficult to build rapport with the health practitioner. In counselling, Latinos would like their therapists to give them clear "advice" – that is why they would go to see a therapist. Fifty percent of participants wanted a counsellor who believes in sharing equal power with their clients; the other 50% preferred a therapist who holds a position of power in the therapy and acts as the clients' guide.

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Vietnamese Canadians

My Community

Vietnamese people are an ethnic group originating in present-day northern Vietnam. Although geographically and linguistically labeled as Southeast Asians, long periods of Chinese domination and influence have placed the Vietnamese culturally closer to East Asians, or more specifically their immediate northern neighbours, the Southern Chinese and other tribes within South China. The word *Việt* is shortened from *Bách Việt*, a name used in ancient times. Nam means “south.”

Viet (Kinh) people account for 87% of the country’s population and mainly inhabit the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta, and major cities. Another 53 ethnic minority groups, totaling over 8 million people, are scattered over mountain areas (covering two-thirds of the country’s territory) spreading from the North to the South. These groups include the Tay, Thai, Muong, Hoa, Khmer, Nung, Hmong, Mien, Cham, Brau, Roman, and Odu.

According to Statistics Canada, there are 240,615 persons of Vietnamese origin in Canada. They live primarily in urban centres in Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, and Alberta. When the suburbs are included, the population of Vietnamese origin is 73,745 in the Greater Toronto Area, 38,660 in the Montréal Urban Community, 34,915 in metropolitan Vancouver, and 21,010 in the Calgary region. According to Statistics Canada (2016), there are 10,435 immigrants (4,875 male and 5,565 female) of Vietnamese origin residing in Edmonton. Because Vietnamese are fairly recent migrants to Canada, the majority are

first-generation Canadians who were born in Vietnam. Less than two in five were born in Canada, whereas 70%, including non-permanent residents, were born abroad.

The mainstream Vietnamese communities began arriving in Canada in the mid-1970s and early 1980s as refugees or “boat people” following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, though a couple of thousand were already living in Quebec before then. Most new arrivals were sponsored by groups of individuals, temples, and churches and settled in areas around southern Ontario, Vancouver, British Columbia, and Montreal.

Between 1975 and 1985, 110,000 settled in Canada (23,000 in Ontario; 13,000 in Quebec; 8,000 in Alberta; 7,000 in British Columbia; 5,000 in Manitoba; 3,000 in Saskatchewan; and 2,000 in the Maritime provinces). As time passed, most eventually settled in urban centres: Vancouver (2.2% Vietnamese), Calgary (1.6% Vietnamese), Montreal (1.6% Vietnamese), Edmonton (1.6% Vietnamese), Toronto (1.4% Vietnamese), Ottawa (1.0% Vietnamese), and Hamilton (0.8% Vietnamese). The next wave of Vietnamese migration came in the late 1980s and 1990s as both refugees and immigrant classes from post-war Vietnam entered Canada. These groups also settled in urban areas, in particular Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary.

The population has grown steadily in recent years, including some last groups of “boat people,” the educated middle class, skilled workers, business class, and family sponsorships. The number of immigrants from Viet-

nam increased 11.3% from 148,400 in 2001 to 165,125 in 2011. In 2011, 96% of Vietnamese immigrants resided in four provinces: Ontario (48.2%), Alberta (16.5%), British Columbia (15.8%), and Quebec (15.7%).

In the 2016 Canadian census, 240,615 people reported being of Vietnamese origin (including single and multiple ethnic-origin responses). In addition, several thousand reported being of Chinese origin but actually are immigrants from Vietnam. Slightly more than 166,000 Canadians reported Vietnamese as their mother tongue. (Vietnamese ranks 14th among immigrant languages in Canada.)

The Vietnamese language reflects the country's unique mix of racial and cultural origins, with its fusion of monotonic Mon-Khmer, and Tai tonality and grammar. Having been a Chinese province for over a millennium (111 BC-939 AD), most of the country's governmental, literary, and technical vocabulary comes from the Chinese language. A writing system called *Chu Nom*, using partly modified Chinese characters, was developed in the 8th century. It was a French missionary in the mid-17th century who developed a system of spelling using the Roman alphabet that employed additional signs and several accents to indicate the tones. The use of this script spread, and it was made the official written language by the French in 1910. Called *Quoc-Ngu* or national language, it is now learned and written by all Vietnamese.

According to the 2016 Canadian census, 166,830 people reported Vietnamese as their mother tongue, or 13,475 more people than in 2011. The Vietnamese language spoken by the majority of the Viet population has regional accents (Northern, Central, and Southern). All are understood by most Vietnamese speakers. Vietnamese is a tonal language with six basic vowel tones. It is very different from English: verbs do not change forms; articles are not

used; nouns do not have plural endings; there are no prefixes, suffixes, or infinitives, and no distinction among pronouns. Honorific pronouns are used to address people of different status or age.

Many of the country's 54 ethnic groups have their own distinct languages, though only a few of the ethnic minority languages have their own script. Vietnamese immigrants who had higher education in Vietnam are more likely to be fluent in English.

Subgroups such as Nha Trang Khanh Hoa Friendship Group, Vietnamese Canadian Friendship Society, Viets Association, and Edmonton Vietnamese Senior Mutual Assistance Society are all non-profit community groups that promote events and programs to connect Vietnamese people in Edmonton and environs. However, these community groups often take different approaches toward community membership. Some are more political in nature (anti-communist) than others.

Charity groups such as Marguerite of Universal Charity Society and the Children Benevolent Foundation of Vietnam do annual fundraising events in Edmonton. The money goes to programs to support young children, vulnerable youth, and seniors in Vietnam. These charity events attract a lot of Vietnamese professionals, business owners, and generous donors.

Tuoi Hac Golden Age Manor is a beautiful Vietnamese seniors residence with a range of accommodations, cultural activities, and service options in North Edmonton. This brand new 4-storey building situated on a quiet street has attracted a lot of Vietnamese seniors.

There are many Vietnamese language schools in big cities like Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, Quebec, and Calgary. These schools interact with each other at a certain level to organize community events, mutually

beneficial programs, and so on. They play an important role in preserving and promoting

Vietnamese language in the community, especially among children and youth.

Immigration and After

The settlement of Vietnamese nationals in Canada resulted from three waves of immigration in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. The first wave consisted mostly of middle-class people who were welcomed to Canada for their professional skills after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Because Vietnam had been part of the French colony of Indochina until 1954, many of these immigrants spoke French, or sometimes English, as a second language.

The second wave of immigration consisted of refugees from South Vietnam, seeking to escape the harsh living conditions and deteriorating human-rights situation following the reunification of the two Vietnams. These are the refugees who the media widely referred to as “boat people.” Moved by the desperate plight of hundreds of thousands who took to the high seas in leaky boats to escape the Communist regime, many Canadians offered to sponsor their journey to Canada.

The third wave comprises additional groups of “boat people” from refugee camps, spousal sponsorships, and family reunions, among others. To many refugee families, immigrating to Canada is a privilege, not a choice. They go to whatever country is prepared to offer them refugee status. Canada accepted these immigrants under variety of immigration programs, such as the war charity programs and family sponsorship programs.

Vietnamese people work hard to support their families. Given a chance for a promising future and freedom for their family, they act quickly. Canada is ranked second in the annual “Best Countries” survey of the U.S. News

& World Report (Frisk, 2017). Canadians enjoy freedom of speech, a great education and healthcare system, welfare benefits (as necessary), old age insurance, unemployment insurance, etc.

The first wave of immigrants (1975-1978) was easy to integrate into Canadian mainstream society because they were educated and went together as families. These immigrants consisted primarily of middle-class people who were accepted into Canada due to their professional skills or because they had family members in Canada to act as sponsors.

The second wave of refugees (1979-1982) was more diverse than the first wave. Many made the dangerous journey from Vietnam on over-crowded, makeshift boats to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) camps in places such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippine, Cambodia, and Indonesia. An estimated one-third of the refugees who escaped by boat did not survive the journey. These immigrants found it difficult to integrate into Canadian mainstream society. Most had not even finished high school. They did not speak English, and most had lost all their documentation before reaching the refugee camps. Some left children in Vietnam with other family members. Parents had to find work as soon as they came to Canada to support family back in Vietnam and then sponsor children later.

Since 1982 Canada has experienced what is called “continuous flow” immigration from Vietnam, consisting of migrants from refugee camps, participants of Vietnam’s Orderly Departure Program, and those arriving through

the efforts of Vietnamese Canadians to reunite their families. Some also immigrate as skilled workers, and under the Canadian Experience Class category. They usually immigrate with their children. A large number of immigrants under the Refugee and Family Reunion classes have found that the immigration process takes a long time.

First, the language barrier is a major settlement challenge for Vietnamese compared to other communities in Canada, such as the Indian and Filipino. Learning and speaking English takes much time and effort. Vietnamese immigrants with lower education tend to find work as soon as they come here to support their families and extended family in Vietnam. As a result, these people do not speak English well and find it difficult to integrate with mainstream Canadian society.

Second, one in three Canadians of Vietnamese origin reported that they experienced discrimination in the first five years after their arrival in Canada. A majority reported that they felt the discrimination was often based on their race/skin colour, religion, language, or accent. Some felt the discrimination was a sign of a lack of sympathy and knowledge of different cultures in mainstream society, or due to the behaviour, complex background, or stress of new immigrants. A significant number claimed that discrimination took place at work or when they were applying for a job or a promotion (Lindsay, 2001). Others could not express themselves well when party to car accidents, divorce cases, and family disputes.

Third, lack of skills and Canadian work experience are major settlement challenges. Canada is a developed country where rules, regulations, and procedures at work and in society are established and enforced. Vietnam is a developing country where many things still

are not established or broadly advocated. In addition, immigrants have not been able to transfer their skills or education in order to do their dream job.

The fourth settlement challenge concerns cultural differences. For example, not all cultures share the same philosophy of discipline. Some hold to the approach of “spare the rod and spoil the child” and resort to various forms of physical punishment or restraint even until the child is an adolescent. To the Canadian health professional, this presents a picture of child abuse. By law, the professional is required to report what he or she perceives as abuse.

Most people do not feel satisfied with their education and career status in Canada. They do not have enough English or Canadian working experience to improve their employment opportunities. Most of their jobs do not require much skill or knowledge of English.

According to Statistics Canada, a relatively large proportion of workers of Vietnamese origin are employed in manufacturing jobs. In 2001, 25% of all employees of Vietnamese origin were employed in manufacturing, versus 8% of the total Canadian workforce. At the same time, 11% of employed Canadians of Vietnamese origin (compared with 6% of all workers) were employed in scientific and technical occupations. On the other hand, only 6% of the Vietnamese workforce held management positions, compared with 10% of all Canadian workers.

Almost one in ten employed Canadians of Vietnamese origin is self-employed. Nine percent of all employed Canadians of Vietnamese origin are self-employed, compared with 12% of the total Canadian workforce (according to 2001 figures). People with higher education and work in higher-paid jobs or business professionals are more likely to feel that they have achieved their goals. Owners of businesses,

such as restaurants, grocery stores, and nail salons, are more likely to feel they have achieved their goals, something which might never had been attainable back home in Vietnam.

However, immigration impacts their lives in many ways. The weather in Edmonton or in Canada in general is cold and dry, the very opposite to Vietnam, which is hot and humid. There are different diseases that they have never before experienced or that doctors would not know or understand. So, recovery is hard. They lose self-confidence because they do not have enough English to communicate in Canadian mainstream society or qualify for promotion in its workforce. The family structure seems to change. Children become grandparents, parents and grandparents become children. They do not understand the local mainstream culture. Children learn the new culture and lose their connection with their roots.

Their connection and communication with their Vietnamese extended family changes dramatically because of distance and time. While they tend to have the same employment rate as the Canadian average, Vietnamese immigrants' income is reported to be far less than that of

the average Canadian. Language and educational barriers, family responsibilities and financial difficulties are major challenges for Canadians of Vietnamese origin. It is difficult to learn English or French while at the same time working to support the family. Going back to school means putting in less time at work or with the family. Vietnamese make sacrifices for their family and future generations.

Most people speak Vietnamese at home so that their children can learn and embrace the culture. The working environment has a major impact on people's ability to speak English. The majority of Vietnamese immigrants who have worked in mainstream Canadian workplaces now have enough knowledge of basic English to manage their day-to-day lives. Those who only find jobs in Vietnamese community workplaces cannot function in English. Roughly 10-20% of people (mostly elderly) who came here back in 1975 or got sponsored by their relatives find it really challenging to learn a new language. They find it hard to communicate with other people to find a job, take the bus, go shopping, etc.

Culture

Vietnamese Canadians feel strongly connected to their ethnic culture, especially to new immigrants, community activists, social groups, and religious groups. Keeping connected to the community brings a person supports, business opportunities, cultural events and pastimes, common goals, and meaningful causes. The Vietnamese community is rich with diverse social, charitable, and religious groups, media, language schools, business professional services, and so on. In Canada's big and medium-sized cities it is easy to find Vietnamese restaurants,

nail salons, and other businesses serving customers in both English and Vietnamese.

Vietnamese have made some significant changes to adapt to their new environment. One common aspect of Vietnamese life is that many generations live in the same household. That may change here in Canada when children want to have their own places. Traditional Vietnamese grandparents give orders to their adult children and can make decisions for their grandchildren. This is not the case in Canadian society. As a result, grandparents

can only give advice if their adult children request it. Grandparents do not play a main role in decisions affecting the lives of their grandchildren, either.

One aspect of Canadian culture they do not like at all is child discipline. Canadian parents and the school system appear to be lenient in disciplining children. Canadian children do not show as much respect to the elderly as children in Vietnam. Senior immigrants feel disconnected from grandchildren attending Canadian schools and society because of different behaviours, languages, and values. There is not much they can do to improve the situation except share their experiences with friends their age and extended family members.

Vietnam was heavily influenced by Chinese culture in terms of politics, government, Confucian social and moral ethics, and art. Vietnamese families are encouraged to stay close together to support one another. Across Canada, being independent and taking responsibility for oneself and one's family are encouraged. The Vietnamese family structure is much more complex than that found in the Canadian mainstream. Accepting and embracing both cultures can result in a happy balance of the two. This is often easier said than done, however. Adult children of Vietnamese immigrants tend to adapt well and follow the Canadian lifestyle.

Many people feel that overall, they have achieved a balance between the two cultures and are well-adjusted. The Vietnamese com-

munity is said to be thriving in Canadian mainstream society. Canada is home to more and more successful individuals of Vietnamese origin who engage in and give back to the local community.

To Vietnamese Canadians it is imperative to understand and keep one's original culture. They are afraid that children may forget it, the language, and tradition. Community groups are trying to promote programs to educate young children about their culture and language. The children might lose their sense of affinity and connection with their roots if they "stray" from their culture. Family ties, respect for elders, and the value of hard work will keep children feeling safe and loved. These values are shared and respected in Canada's mainstream cultures and many other cultures around the world.

Vietnamese do find respect for and acceptance of their cultural identity in the mainstream culture. For example, Vietnamese adults take care of their elderly parents and Vietnamese children show special respect for their elderly grandparents. They are proud of these family ties, of the Lunar New Year (*Tet*), and the mid-autumn festival and would like to share them with others.

They would like to see more fairness towards women, however. Women should have stronger voices in the family and in society. For example, women performing leadership roles in Vietnamese organizations are less common than men.

Social Environments

Vietnamese Canadians who can speak English or French are more likely to get involved in their community league and children's schools. However, many Vietnamese middle-aged and

senior immigrants with less English proficiency also are active in the Vietnamese Buddhist temples and Christian churches. Many skilled people volunteer their time, running daily

activities and special events at temples and churches. They enjoy the recreational facilities in the cities where they live. The majority of Vietnamese Canadians participate in some of their cultural community events. These are a great way for them to celebrate shared cultural values.

For Vietnamese, arranging a proper funeral for a loved one is one of the most filial things a person can do. In reality, a culturally proper funeral is more than an empty gesture to the dead, it helps the living to grieve and go on with life. The elaborate details of death rituals require the intensive involvement of the family social network and the whole community. These rituals communicate the social values of communal responsibilities.

Vietnamese have a close circle of friends from their ethnic community. This is especially true for people who join the same ethnic churches, temples, charity, or community groups. Vietnamese churches and temples are open daily and community groups schedule hours for people to come during the week as well. However, people usually meet on the weekend for special occasions such as Tet, weddings, funerals, birthday parties, fund-raising events, and Vietnamese concerts. All Vietnamese Canadians who can speak English have friends in the mainstream or other communities. They respect and live in harmony with others in Canadian society.

They participate in political processes and other aspects of mainstream Canadian society. For example, Mr. Thanh Hai Ngo is the first Vietnamese Canadian to be appointed to the Senate. Mr. Thomas Kyle Dang (born April 7, 1995) is a Canadian politician who was elected in 2015 to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, representing the electoral district of Edmonton-South West. Mr. Dang is the youngest MLA ever to be elected in Alberta.

Other notable Canadians of Vietnamese origin include concert pianist Dang Thai Son, who won first prize at the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in 1980; Eve-Mary Thai Thi Lac, federal MP for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, Québec and the first Vietnamese Canadian woman elected to the House of Commons; filmmaker and activist Paul Nguyen; UNESCO goodwill ambassador Kim Phúc; writer Kim Thùy; and Carol Huynh, who won the gold medal for women's freestyle wrestling at the 2008 Olympic Summer Games in Beijing and the bronze medal in her division at the 2012 Summer Games in London.

Vietnamese Canadians of all ages watch ethnic concert videos and TV channels produced in the United States, such as SBTN TV, Asia shows, the Paris By Night show, and Vietface TV. Educated people who speak English or French pay attention to Canadian news and sports. The youth and young families often watch English movies. Local ethnic TV channels also appeal to Vietnamese Canadians, especially those with limited English or French and more recent immigrants.

People feel frustrated when they experience racism or discrimination. Most of the time they do not do anything about it because Vietnamese people always try to avoid disputes. They have a saying, "*Vô phúc đáo tụng đình*," which means, "It is wise not to sue others." Going through the court process is lengthy, expensive, and time-consuming. It is best to let things go and ignore the wrongdoing. In future, they will try to be more careful when bad things happen to occur. That being said, these experiences do not usually affect them too badly. Canada is a safe country compared to many others in the world, including Vietnam. Most Canadians of Vietnamese origin feel safe in their neighbourhoods and in Canada.

Family

Living with extended families is a common reality in Vietnam. However, nowadays a lot of young people prefer to live separately if they are financially capable. Vietnamese immigrants do not often live with extended families for two main reasons. First of all, their extended families are not here. Second, western culture encourages independence and personal space.

Nevertheless, living with an extended family has a lot of benefits, such as cost savings as a result of shared accommodation, fun time, family support, and cultural preservation. The loss of an extended family significantly affects Vietnamese Canadians and their children in Canada.

Firstly, parents with young children find it difficult to manage work and family at the same time. They do not have extended family here to help them take care of the children while parents are at work. It is expensive to send kids to mainstream Canadian daycares. Parents often use non-licensed Vietnamese day homes to care for their children or an older child simply takes care of the young ones while their parents are at work.

Secondly, it takes a village to raise a child. Vietnamese children in Canada do not know or understand the Vietnamese culture and extended family because they might have never been to Vietnam or met their extended family. It is hard to build a strong relationship at long distance. Additionally, the children do not speak Vietnamese well and their parents or extended family lack the English vocabulary to talk to their children. In many cases children have lost respect for their parents and/or extended family due to a lack of communication and to different points of view.

Vietnamese immigrants tend to stay close to their relatives or family members in Canada to support their settlement. But if relatives are busy with work and their own families, new immigrants may not always get the support they need. It is very common for Vietnamese immigrants who run small businesses to visit their friends and families back home and bring over their parents on visitor or immigrant visas.

Traditionally, Vietnamese family is patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal, often with two, three, or four generations under one roof. There is the immediate family (*Nha*) and the extended family (*Ho*). In Vietnam, the immediate family is the nuclear family plus the husband's parents and the spouses and children of adult sons. The extended family is the immediate family plus family members of the same name and relatives residing in close proximity.

Family members are expected to work and behave for the welfare of the group. Families may publicly denounce a member who is ill-behaved; they may also proclaim family achievements. Each member has a designated kinship term, and these are used when addressing one another. The father has ultimate responsibility and acts as an authority and leader when delegating tasks and involving others in decision-making. The father also leads the family in ancestor worship. In Vietnam, the father often worked outside the home, while the mother cared for the children and managed the household. Grandparents helped with childcare, and children helped with various chores. Younger siblings are expected to obey older siblings, and aunts and uncles are treated as parents.

In addition to the family head, other adult males in the family have decision-making power or rights. An adult son has the most power and his wife will have the least. Sibling order or gender has a special role to play. The eldest son has the most responsibility. The eldest son's wife has the responsibility to support her husband. One of the eldest son's responsibilities is to bear a son to continue the worship of ancestors; another is to take care of his parents and younger siblings financially, physically, and mentally.

Vietnamese parents are stricter because that is what they were taught when they were young. They believe that children need guidance in all aspects of their lives. They believe children are young and inexperienced. Parents have experience, so they tell children what to do and expect children to obey accordingly. Children are expected to say *Thưa* (meaning "please") in front of the honorific name to show respect to elders. Children are also expected to bow their heads to elders to show respect. (The depth of the bow is not a factor.)

Talking back to adults and open disagreement with them are considered disrespectful and disobedient behaviours. Many will not vocalize disagreement to avoid confrontation or disrespect. Praising someone profusely is often regarded as flattery, and sometimes even mockery. Most people are very modest and deflect praise. Insults to elders or ancestors are very serious and often lead to severed social ties.

Adult children live with their parents until they get married and prefer to move out. Under the influence of western culture, adult children want to live on their own. However, parents still want to live with the families of their adult children. It is common to sponsor parents, so they can live with the family. Traditionally, the husband's parents live with the family. However, this might vary from family to family. This something for the family to work out.

Traditionally, elderly parents play an important role in making household decisions as long as they are able. This is also a gesture of respect from the children and adult children. In modern Vietnamese families and especially in Canada, elderly parents can only play an advisory role in making decisions that involve their adult children and grandchildren. Elderly parents often help with babysitting, cooking, and cleaning around the house. All family members are expected to take care of the elderly parents.

There are few nursing homes in Vietnam. Elderly parents who are in need of care will live with the younger generation. Only in rare situations, for example, when they do not have a family to support them, will a senior citizen reside in a nursing home. (It is not common in the United States for seniors to live in a nursing home if they have children they can live with – but it is more common than in Vietnam.) Seniors who do not speak English fluently probably would not be comfortable in a nursing home where Vietnamese is not spoken.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Influenced by Buddhist theology and Confucian philosophy, Vietnamese once believed that one's fate in marriage, as well as one's wealth and position, were preordained.

(Choice could play a role in activating a positive or negative fate, however.) Traditionally, children lived with their parents until marriage, then the couple moved into the household of

the husband's father. The extended family arranged the marriage, but individuals were usually consulted about their choice of mate. The typical engagement lasted six months, with little contact between the bride and groom prior to the marriage. Traditionally the marriage ceremony occurred at the home of the bride or groom. Men usually married at 20-30 years of age, and women at 18-25. Women kept their maiden names legally but used their husband's name for daily communication.

Arranged marriages were common in Vietnam right through to the early 1990s. As western influence has increased, parents have taken more of an advisory role in the choice of their child's mate and arranged marriages have grown less frequent. In Canada, most young Vietnamese date in the same way as Canadian youth. Parents tend to keep a close watch on the decision to marry. There are a variety of different wedding practices, generally-speaking Buddhist and Christian ceremonies are the most common in Edmonton or Canada.

If Vietnamese parents want to arrange their children's marriages, it is because they believe they know what is best for their children and the family. There's an old saying in Vietnamese, "*Cá không ăn muối cá ươn, con cãi cha mẹ trăm đường con hư*," which means "unsalted fish easily goes bad, stubborn children easily go wrong." Children lack experience to make their own decisions regarding such matters as marriage. There are many other factors involved in a marriage besides love.

Some parents do have a successful arranged marriage and they believe it could work for their children too. Parents play an important role in doing "due diligence" on their children's behalf to make sure the marriage can last and involve less risk. If children do not accept the matches made for them by their parents, the marriage process can take a longer

time, or not happen at all. Parents often give up trying to arrange matches if their children reject their advice.

Arranged marriages in Canada face a number of problems. There are relationships that are verbally and physically abusive. For reasons of shame, women suffer by themselves rather than share with others, including their families, friends, or society. Women experience low esteem. The children of arranged marriages are affected. Having been taught to obey their parents and grandparents, and not to think for themselves, they are not able to make decisions based on what is best for themselves. Instead, they make decisions based on what other people will think.

In Canada there is not as much community pressure to follow traditions. The community will not thrive if people feel pressured to join. For example, if a woman feels pressured to dress well when she attends the Vietnamese church, she will just attend a Canadian mainstream church instead. Canadian culture embraces freedom, independence, and diversity. This creates a welcoming environment for all minority ethnic groups, including the Vietnamese community. Vietnamese Canadians feel at home away from home. This encourages people to open up and to be active in a community that promotes cultural differences.

Interracial marriage is common in the community. While such marriages are considered respectable and legitimate, they can be a source of cultural misunderstandings, different expectations, family disapproval, and lack of compromise. This can cause an unhappy family. If parents do not approve of their children's selected spouse, it is up to the couple to decide what they want to do. Parents can influence or advise but they do not control their children's decision. In extreme cases, parents and children will disown one another and stop communicating.

All families experience conflict of some kind. The conflict varies according to place and culture. Common issues related to marital conflict in Vietnamese Canadian families are extended family issues, finance, children, careers, and housework. We are unaware of any statistical basis for saying that marriage conflict is more common in Vietnam than in Canada.

In Vietnam, the decision to separate or divorce requires careful discussion between extended family members on both sides, including parents, aunts, and uncles. In Canada, there is less of a stigma associated with divorce. Divorce is uncommon among Vietnamese in both countries, though in Vietnam the divorce rate is lower than in Canada. This can partly be attributed to the values of a patriarchal society and to the notion of marrying for life, which is more pervasive. A man is considered responsible for his spouse until death.

Some immigrant women are not fully adapted to life in Canada. Women who are unable to speak English or do not know how to drive are especially dependent on their husbands. Wives who are mothers generally put their children first; keeping the marriage intact is seen as best for the children. So even if the woman is able to support herself, divorce will not usually be

considered unless there is domestic abuse. The attitude toward divorce is changing. Vietnamese society in both countries seems to have grown more tolerant of marriage break-up or divorce than in the past.

In Vietnam, marriage break-up or divorce is considered shameful for the woman involved. In Canada, too, women generally seem to get more of the blame when marriages break down. Vietnamese people are still affected heavily by Confucianism. The majority believes the wife should take more responsibility in avoiding conflict, caring for and nurturing the marriage. There is a Vietnamese saying that people still use, “Men make houses, women make homes.” Men are busy working outside of the home, building their careers and doing the heavy lifting. The life of a woman is governed by the “rule of three subordinations” (*Tam Tong*). At home, she is subordinate to her father. After her marriage she is subordinate to her husband. After her husband’s death, she is subordinate to her son (*Tai Gia tong Phu, xuat gia tong phu, phu tu tong tu*). The Four Virtues (*Tu Duc*) also guide her life: skillful housekeeping, beauty, appropriate speech, and moral conduct (*cong, dung, ngon, hanh*).

Children and Youth

Vietnamese parents worry about their children, especially adolescent sons or daughters. Adolescence is a risky stage because young people are necessarily at the mercy of ignorance, inexperience, and the unexpected (not to mention the influence of peers). They dare to experiment with acting more grown up. Because they want to try new freedoms before they are ready, they learn many of their hardest lessons in life after the fact.

Parents mainly worry about differences in the behaviour and communication of adolescent sons or daughters. The latter either do not know enough Vietnamese to communicate with their parents, or just ignore their advice because of different beliefs and perspectives. The parents do not have enough English and parenting skills to guide their children. In addition, western culture sometimes is incompatible with Vietnamese tradition.

The parents were raised differently in Vietnam. An example would be adolescents sleeping overnight at each others' place or 18-year-olds moving out of their parents' place to live with roommates their own age. Children of Vietnamese origin are encouraged to help with housework, volunteer in the community, and possibly find a suitable job. From a very young age, parents and other family members educate children in "filial piety," a key part of Vietnamese culture which requires that children give parents and elders respect, love, and care.

The majority of today's Vietnamese Canadian adolescents were born in Canada. Their relationships with their parents are tighter and more connected than the relationships between their parents' and grandparents' generations. Adolescent children of Vietnamese immigrants (1979-1982) do not feel as close and connected to their parents because their parents may have been physically or emotionally absent. The parent/child space may not have been there to protect the youngster from unknown or hostile environmental forces. Most refugee parents were in the midst of attempts to survive their own trauma, grieve their own losses, and cope with the pressing demands of initial resettlement. Bonds between parents and children have been lost, disrupted, distorted, or even reversed when children are placed in parental roles and relied upon for support and care.

Lower self-esteem among the Vietnamese youth is due to an inability to cope with intercultural challenges, a complex family background, less parental involvement in their children's lives, and other medical issues. Youth often find it difficult to keep their traditional culture, background, and/or language and integrate into Canadian society. This requires extensive educational integration between schools, community, and parents. This process can consume a great deal of time and money.

Young people of Vietnamese origin are somewhat more likely than other young Canadians to attend school. In 2001, 63% of the Vietnamese community aged 15-24 was enrolled in a full-time educational program, compared to 57% of all Canadians in this age group. Among young people of Vietnamese origin, men and women were equally likely to attend school full-time. This contrasts with the overall population, in which young women aged 15-24 were more likely than young men to be in school in 2001.

Nowadays, youth identifying as LGBTQ do share their sexual orientation with their family. However, the parents and family still find it shameful. The subject is not usually brought up for discussion. The families wish their LGBTQ children would become normal one day. Many schools in Vietnam require school uniforms, mixed classes, and sex education. Parents seem open to new learning opportunities. Vietnamese parents do not often discuss sensitive topics such as sex education with their children. They tend to leave that topic to the school and to the children themselves to figure out.

Common Vietnamese people have a great love of knowledge and learning. They have a particular respect and admiration for educated individuals. Education is the best bet for better future with financial success and social status. The children's success is also the parents' success. In general, Vietnamese parents are quite involved in their children's schooling or education. They tend to decide or persuade their children to choose a certain school and occupation. Among the Vietnamese, people associated with knowledge and learning (scholars, writers, and teachers) have always been highly respected, not only by the students but also by parents and people from all walks of life. Prestigious careers include those

of doctor, lawyer, university professor, teacher, engineer, scientist, researcher, priest, and Buddhist monk.

The majority of Vietnamese believe that education is more valuable than wealth and material success. Rich people who are not educated are often looked down upon by other people. They themselves may feel inferior to learned people who are poor. In the traditional social system, the scholar ranked first, before the farmer, artisan, and tradesman. The love of learning does not spring from purely disinterested motives. The lure of prestige and the prospect of improved social status are among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of knowledge. Education represents the essential means of climbing the social ladder and attaining good job opportunities. It is the prime force of vertical mobility in Vietnamese society.

Parents sometimes overstep their roles and persuade their children to choose a secure, well-respected, and prestigious occupation, such as a doctor, lawyer, dentist, nurse, or teacher. Parents always want the best for their children. However, depending on one's perspectives, experiences, and family background, it is quite possible for parents to want their children to pursue something that is personally meaningful, even if it is not as prestigious. For example, consider the case of a 46-year-old woman with an arranged marriage and two children. She owns a small retail business in Canada. The business is doing well, and her

family is considered happy. She believes the saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." She tries to influence her children to follow the family tradition and become entrepreneurs, but her children's wishes are art and dance. Her children will make the final decision when choosing a career.

Vietnamese children feel a clash of values: personal sacrifices for other family members versus personal choices; emotional self-restraint versus free expression of feelings and emotions; deference and respect for elders versus expressing one's opinions, thinking critically, and questioning. Children of Vietnamese origin are taught from a very young age that they need to think for others, especially family members. They also attend schools and interact with others in Canadian society where they learn different values and behaviour. Essentially, the children have to negotiate between two cultures in order to develop an identity that is bicultural and bilingual, integrating the inner self with the collective self – one's parents, extended family, ethnic group, and Canadian society.

Vietnamese children tend to keep some parts of their parents' heritage and values and to reject others. For example, arranged marriage, discrimination against women, social pressure to get married, and superstition are cultural values that youth tend to reject. Cultural values such as respect for elders, hard work, and family ties are things youth tend to keep.

Status of Women

In Canada, women and men are considered equal in status. However, according to Confucian tenets, men have higher status than women, and sons are valued more highly than

daughters. Traditionally, an ideal man should develop through four steps. First, he must learn to cultivate himself and second, to govern his family. If he does this successfully, he

can rule the country, and then pacify the world. To do this he must be merciful and kind, adhere to the rites and ceremonies of family and social hierarchy, help the needy, be strong and determined, and be trustworthy and loyal.

A traditional Vietnamese woman is governed by the aforementioned rule of three subordinations. She is considered “virtuous” if she is an effective homemaker, a good cook, and has the appearance of modesty coupled with feminine grace. Ideally, she is soft spoken, and her moral conduct is above reproach. In reality, in Vietnam and in Canada, mothers are not docile. The mother is considered the home minister (*noi tuong*) and is responsible for family harmony, the family budget, and family schedules. She also makes decisions with the father. Tasks were divided along gender lines in Vietnam; fathers typically worked outside the home. With the war, many men were absent from the home and women took on more independence out of necessity. This trend has continued with migration to Canada.

Wives and mothers have the same rights as husbands and fathers in a Vietnamese family. However, it is common for wives and mothers to let the husband make all the final important decisions. Nowadays in Vietnamese society, girls and boys are usually treated equally by the parents and other family members. They are all allowed to get access to the same opportunities in terms of education, extra-curricular activities, and inheritance. Boys in Vietnamese Canadian families are not considered “preferred” gender children as they used to be.

As in the overall Canadian population, Vietnamese men are more likely than their female counterparts to be employed outside the home. In 2001, 69% of men of Vietnamese origin aged 15 and over were part of the paid workforce, compared with 56% of adult women of Vietnamese origin. Modern Vietnamese wom-

en in both Vietnam and Canada are expected to contribute to the family income. Depending on various factors, women may have their own bank accounts. Women do have access to the family income. However, a lot of women still tend to shy away from managing the family's finances. They are often joint owners of family properties, shares, and other assets. Men usually make the decisions about family finances or family expenditures.

Many of the jobs available in Canada to Vietnamese refugees were of lower status. This fit the expectations of refugee women, but not refugee men. As a result, many families depend on the income of the mother, which has readjusted family roles and expectations. Due to the effect of migration and Western influence, traditional gender roles are changing, and Vietnamese Canadian families display varying degrees of traditionalism.

Living with and caring for in-laws has been very common in Vietnam until now. Married couples in Canada tend to live independently. Vietnamese women are encouraged to join the workforce to supplement the family's income. They are expected to take part in caring for the family, including in-laws.

Abuse is considered a shameful family issue. Families often keep it quiet and hide it from the community. Women who are in abusive relationships feel shame about their abusive spouse, but seek help only as a last resort, in order to save their lives. The help usually comes from parents and siblings first and then friends, relatives, or government agencies. Intervention by community members usually occurs when the abuse becomes public knowledge due to the reports of the victims or witnesses. The abuser's actions are not considered a felony and usually ignored.

Women are expected to tolerate abuse. There is a lack of social assistance and sup-

port in Vietnam so most of the time women do not know where to look for help. If a woman does seek help, she is still expected to stay with her husband. A woman's parents and siblings will support her if she pursues a divorce. Her parents usually do all the negotiations and draw up the separation agreement with the in-laws on her behalf. If the woman's parents are absent or not comfortable with the divorce process, her brother (i.e., her parents' eldest son) will assume the responsibility to support them.

Religion

Historically, religion in Vietnam has been defined largely by a mix of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, known in Vietnamese as the *Tam Giáo* ("triple religion"). Catholicism is also practiced in modern Vietnam. Ancestor worship is common in Vietnamese culture. In 2001, 48% of people of Vietnamese origin said they were Buddhist, while 22% said they were Catholic and 5% said they belonged to either a mainline Protestant denomination or another Christian group. At the same time, a relatively large proportion of people of Vietnamese origin (24%), said they had no religious affiliation, compared with 17% of Canada's overall population.

There are many Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Canada. In Edmonton, the two main Buddhist temples are Truc Lam Monastery and Phat Quang Monastery. Besides their religious purpose, they attract community members as gathering places for cultural events such as Tet and Vietnamese language classes for children.

There are many Vietnamese churches in big cities, like Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, and Calgary. In Edmonton, there are five Christian churches: Queen of Martyrs Viet-

In modern Vietnamese society, young women in urban areas have more opportunities to pursue their identity or individual aspirations. More and more young women have the freedom to travel, make friends, or date. However, they still experience great pressure to get married at a certain age (23-27 years old). They are expected to avoid actions that may bring shame upon the family, such as being a single mom, dating too many boys, or being lesbian. They also are heavily pressured to have children right after they marry.

namese Parish (Roman Catholic), Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church (Protestant), Vietnamese Alliance Church, Edmonton Vietnamese Baptist Church, and Edmonton Vietnamese Fellowship Church. Like temples, churches play an important role, not only in religious practices, but also in celebrating Vietnamese holidays, performing weddings and funerals, and organizing other social gatherings.

In Vietnam, there are many different religions and this diversity extends to Canada. Confucianism and Taoism underlie many Vietnamese traditions. Confucianism is more a code of behaviour than a religion, emphasizing filial piety and obligation, altruism, and the belief that man creates his own destiny. Music, respect for authority (including teachers), and social rites are very important.

Founded by a Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu, Taoism teaches the goal of becoming an Ultimate and Unconditioned being through thrift, humility, and compassion. Taoists may worship many gods, and value simplicity, patience, and contentment. They avoid confrontation and strive for harmony both between men and between man and nature. Some Taoist groups

also worship deities or other religions. They have an organized clergy and temples. Though many Vietnamese do not practice this religion, Taoism has strongly influenced Vietnamese culture.

Buddhism was the predominant religion in Vietnam, practiced by an estimated 90% of the population prior to the war. In Canada, the majority of Vietnamese are Buddhist. There are two main forms in Vietnam. The southern Hinayana believe only monks and nuns can achieve enlightenment, while the northern Mahayana believe laymen can attain enlightenment as well. Buddhist believe in Karma, action, and consequences.

Catholicism was introduced in the late 16th century by the Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Catholics in Vietnam have intermittently suffered persecution. Before the collapse of South Vietnam, an estimated 2 million people (of a population of 17 million) practiced Catholicism. In addition, many Vietnamese practice animism (worship of spirits and natural forces), ancestor worship, or astrology, and are very superstitious. Older refugees in Canada continue these practices and beliefs,

while many younger people in the community do not. Cao Dai and Hoa Hao are both sects with little influence.

Vietnamese believe that an imbalance of the individual, the family, and social, environmental, and cosmic spheres can result in illness. These beliefs sometimes give people resilience to deal with their illness with non-scientific remedies. Religion and spirituality contribute to people living a healthier life. People become active members of some religious or spiritual groups. There are more opportunities for them to interact and practice shared values and cultures.

It is common for people to go to alternative medicine practitioners for health-related issues, like herbalists, spiritual healers, monks, acupressurists, and acupuncturists. In May 2017, many Vietnamese people in Edmonton lined up to see a monk, healer, and acupressurist renowned among Vietnamese communities, Vo Hoang Yen. Mr. Vo Hoang Yen is said to heal many diseases and conditions, such as goiter, epilepsy, seizures, deafness, and brain injury, as well as problems affecting joints, limbs, and the spine.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

Psychological counselling is expected to help achieve a range of outcomes: clarification of issues or problems; finding new ways of looking at a problem or issue in order to increase hope, control, confidence, and self-esteem; relief at having been released from a burden; strategies for achieving personal goals through a specific series of reasonable actions; assistance with the positive and effective management of a problem or issue; and psychological

education – greater knowledge of human behaviour and human nature.

For example, I was anxious and frustrated as a new mother. I took my daughter, aged six months, to Vietnam to visit family. My daughter was not as chubby as other babies her age. My extended family members in Vietnam gave me a hard time about my skills as a mother. I took these judgments hard; I felt horrible about myself. I was anxious to find ways to

help my baby gain weight. Seeing a mental health professional helped me to look at the situation differently. I did not need to compare my baby with others. Babies come in all different sizes. I could not control what other people believe is a suitable weight for a 6-month-old baby. I needed to focus on things I could control, such as regular visits to the pediatrician, offering my baby healthy food, relaxing, and staying positive.

A respectful and trusting relationship between a client and counsellor is essential for effective counselling. Here are some things that counsellors can do to build such a relationship. The counsellor can ask the client questions about their personal and medical backgrounds, their beliefs, and their expectations of treatment and the counsellor. The counsellor needs to withhold judgment and take the time and patience to build a mutual understanding with the client. The counsellor can discuss treatment methods and offer the client reasonable advice as well as detailed action plans. Follow-up can help to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment. The counsellors should disclose any possible conflict of interest now or in the future.

Here are some things that can make it difficult for a client to build respectful or trusting relationship with a counsellor:

- Age: Elders do not feel comfortable talking to counsellors who are much younger than them. They want to talk to a more “experienced” counsellor.
- Disagreement: For example, clients find it difficult to follow the counsellor’s advice because they find it unrealistic.
- Cultural differences: Family and tradition, and reality versus theory.
- Knowledge: The patient is not well-informed about the counsellor’s skills or about mental health in general.

- Personal background: Differences in experience, stereotypes, and a refusal to open up and learn about mental health. A lot of baby boomer immigrants of Vietnamese origin are now in their 60s. They are set in their own way of thinking and do not believe in counselling services. They think the counsellor will not understand their situation, so his/her advice will have no practical value.

There are also some common rules of social interaction which a counsellor should respect. In modern Vietnam, men do shake hands with women. Address the head male first, adults before children, and use a formal name or respectful titles. It is quite common for Vietnamese not to make direct eye contact. Certainly, members of the Vietnamese community have adapted well to the Canadian culture. Nowadays, Canadian social interactions are quite similar to those in Vietnam. Yet practicing such social interactions will be very helpful in establishing rapport with the counsellor.

In many cultures, family matters or intimate personal matters are not discussed outside the family. However, mental health issues are often deeply connected to these issues. To suggest appropriate strategies it would be very beneficial for a counsellor first to understand the client’s situation and personality. It really depends on the person. Many clients may share detailed information in order to receive more accurate advice. Others may not, because they are ashamed or afraid that nothing can be done to solve the problem.

Similarly, in some cultures, emotional restraint is considered superior to expression or open discussion of emotions and feelings. Effective counselling can depend on exploration of emotions and feelings. The respondents would feel uncomfortable if a counsellor asked them to reveal deep-seated fears and

anxieties in the early stage of counselling. It takes time to establish trust with a counsellor. The respondents want to learn more about the counsellor before sharing more information. They need to know if the counsellor is willing to understand their personal differences.

The respondents would be comfortable discussing the following subjects with their counsellor if they related to their presenting issues: childhood; pre-migration challenges; immigration-related issues; experiences of racism and discrimination; and religion. They may not feel comfortable discussing with their counsellor such matters as relate to their sexual lives and to activities deemed unacceptable or controversial by social norms or religion (e.g., cannabis consumption, abortion).

Certain things might prevent people from opening up to a counsellor and communicating freely: fear that the counsellor does not understand their cultural values or belief systems; fear that the counsellor will not respect the client after knowing their weaknesses; and fear that the counsellor would be unsympathetic and apply cultural stereotypes to the client.

While the counsellor explores issues and provides support, some clients would want him/her to give clear “advice” while others would much rather work on their own with the information they have received. The respondents would appreciate some small, clear pieces of advice early in treatment, which they could apply immediately and start measuring their progress. Counsellors have knowledge, skills, and experience that the clients are lacking. The counsellor’s professional advice is certainly worth considering.

Many counsellors believe in equalizing the power between therapist and client and not holding a power position in therapy. This would make the clients feel more comfortable with the idea of counselling. Over-controlling the conversation in therapy can create misunderstanding and lack of mutual trust between client and therapist. Equalizing the power brings a sense of control for both client and therapist, so they can communicate in the way that would make sense for both.

In their training many counsellors are taught to have clients with cultures different from their own “teach” them about their culture and the norms, beliefs, and worldviews. This practice may assist the counselling process. Everyone needs to start somewhere to be somebody later. Continuous and diversified learning will result in better service and more effective treatment. The respondents do not mind contributing to the process of improving the counselling service. It is a win-win situation.

Counsellors often review a client’s history and help the client see how his or her upbringing has influenced who the client is today (both positively and negatively). This involves voicing negative aspects of a client’s upbringing, family members, etc. The respondents believe that it is acceptable for counsellors to review their history and help them see how their upbringing has influenced who they are today, both positively and negatively. The respondents would appreciate counsellors for taking the time to understand them. The respondents believe that getting to know and understanding the client would be critical to establishing trust between client and counsellor.

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Somali Canadians

My Community

Somalis are an ethnic group located in the eastern part of Africa. Ninety-five percent of Somalis have originated from the Republic of Somalia and have historically inhabited Somalia. However, some ethnic minorities that inhabit the southern region are generally termed “Bantus.” Somalia is known as the “horn of Africa” due to its unique location. It is the easternmost extension of the African continent. Geographically, Somalia is located just north of Kenya, east of Ethiopia, and just south of Djibouti. The bodies of water that surround Somalia are the Gulf of Aden, situated to the north, and the Indian Ocean to the east. Somalia has the longest coastline in all of Africa and the Middle East.

According to the website “CanadaImmigrants.com,” the total population of Somalis in

Edmonton is currently unknown. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 44,995 people in Canada reported a Somali ancestry.

Somalis began emigrating to Canada in the late 1980s and early 1990s following the Somali civil war in 1991. They continue to immigrate to Canada to the present day. Somalis first concentrated in the southern region of Ontario, specifically Ottawa and Toronto. Toronto currently has the largest Somali population in Canada. In the past decade, many Somalis have moved to the Albertan cities of Calgary and Edmonton. The population of Somalis in Canada has grown tremendously, especially since 2008. Somalia has one official language, Somali. It is Somalia’s mother tongue and is spoken by 100% of the population. There are no linguist or religious sub-groups.

Immigration and After

The civil war left Somalia in ruins. The government collapsed in every respect. In terms of infrastructure, the military, finance, etc., Somalia became a Third World country. Resources became scarce and opportunities nonexistent. As a result, Somalis have continued emigrating to Europe, North America, Australia, and the Arab peninsula. Fortunately, many have successfully obtained permanent residence and citizenship. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a major organization which has facilitated the migration of millions of Somalis to Western countries. Somalis living outside Somalia are known

as the “Somali diaspora.”

Somalis immigrate to Canada for several reasons, primarily safety, financial opportunities, and health. Canada has a strong health-care system that is free; it is a safe country with a stable government; and its highly developed economy creates job opportunities and even the possibility of starting small businesses.

The process of immigration is certainly difficult for Somalis. They face countless barriers. This process can be very daunting as Somalis anxiously wait to be accepted by UNHCR or for the Canadian government to approve their immigration. The situation is totally out of

their control, and all they can do is hope and pray. Sponsorships generally are a lot less difficult. Why? Because the one being sponsored generally has the support of extended family members already established in Canada for a number of years. For the same reason, it is a lot easier for sponsored immigrants than refugees to integrate into Canadian society.

One of the major challenges Somalis face in Canada is language. Not knowing one of Canada's two official languages poses a serious difficulty. For every situation that requires communication, a translator is needed. Even if a translator is available to them, he/she cannot always be at their side. All the letters they receive in the mail regarding their application require a good command of the English language which most Somali migrants do not have.

Another challenge is lack of education or credentials. Since the collapse of Somalia's government, obtaining an education in Somalia largely depends on a person's socio-economic status. Only those Somali children go to school whose parents can afford to send them. Post-secondary education in Somalia is even less accessible. There are few universities there and they can be quite costly to attend. Employment opportunities being so scarce in Somalia, it is very uncommon for parents in Somalia to send their children off to university. As a result, many Somalis migrate to Canada without possessing any higher education or special skills that they can contribute or that will be recognized by the Canadian economy.

Culture

There are two main priorities for Somalis: adhering to their religion and sticking to their ethnic culture. The former is more important than the latter. Somalis represent their culture

Many are very happy to have left Somalia and gained permanent residency in Canada. They are thankful simply for the opportunity to live here. At the same time, their dreams are still beyond reach. This definitely impacts them negatively in every respect, just as it would any other person – their health, family, relationships, and finances. Feelings of non-fulfillment lead to feelings of inadequacy which lead to low confidence. In turn, low confidence opens the door to risky behaviours and bad habits.

Somalis find the language barrier difficult to overcome because of the many responsibilities that they have to juggle. Women have to juggle raising their children and educating themselves. Men have to juggle providing for their family while upgrading their skills for better job prospects. It is difficult to estimate what percentage of the Somali community in Canada has meaningful employment. From discussions with young Somalis, we learn that far more women than men feel that they have meaningful, fulfilling jobs. Nevertheless, a large proportion of young Somalis feel happy with their level of education and occupation.

Some Somalis have basic English language skills. Many, especially recent newcomers, barely comprehend or speak English. Many have at least one person in their family or a friend who knows English who can help them and act as a translator. Somalis usually begin to learn basic English after they have spent one year adapting to life in Canada.

so well, especially in their clothing, that a large percentage of Somalis wear both the Islamic headscarf and the cultural. Everywhere Somalis go, they generally go in a large group. When

they move to a city, they all tend to concentrate in one particular part of town. They love being surrounded by their own people and their culture. Somalis are a walking representation of both their religion and their culture. They do it effortlessly. To stay connected, they stick together, they purchase goods from each other, and they support each other. They form communities amongst themselves. As much as possible they try to unify themselves.

Somalis try to adapt. They feel that they have changed their culture in certain respects to adapt to their new environment. One small example of this is language. Parents are permitting their children to speak English rather than Somali at home. Another example is the celebration of holidays that are special to Western or Canadian culture, such as birthdays, Valentine's day, Easter, Halloween, etc. For first-generation Somalis, these holidays are not relevant. But second-generation Somalis, especially the younger ones, are exposed to them in public schools, so it becomes part of their culture as well. At times even a child new to the country and culture may be asked what costume they will wear to school for Halloween. So they adapt.

The older generation fears losing the younger generation if it abandons traditional Somali clothing and language, and the values inherent to Somali culture. Generally, Somali parents work hard to instil the culture in their children while raising them. For example, they speak Somali with their children at home. They encourage them to make friends with other children from the Somali community. They try to raise them in a Somali environment whenever possible and take them to Somali events. Somalis do not have an issue with their children integrating into Canadian society so long as it does not conflict with the teachings of their religion or with the values

of their culture. Parents sometimes take their children all the way back to their home country just to give them a change of environment and to revive Somali culture and religion in their lives. There can certainly be a balance between the two cultures if individuals exercise discretion while adapting, and do not try to change fundamental aspects or core values of their faith or culture.

The first generation of Somali Canadians has a greater struggle finding a happy balance between the two cultures. An apt example of this is the conflicting expectations of Somali-Canadian parents. They may expect their children to marry and start a family at a certain age. But the children may want to progress professionally and achieve financial stability before jumping into marriage and child-raising. Canadian culture encourages individualism while Somali culture encourages collectivism. This may be a main reason for value conflicts. Another is alcohol, which Somalis cannot consume.

Somalis often worry about their children not valuing their culture enough. They think that both culture and religion protect Somali children from a lot of the risks associated with adolescence and youth, such as alcoholism, smoking, drugs, suicide, sex, etc. Adherence to Somali religion and culture automatically protects children from engaging in these reckless or self-harmful behaviours. By upholding their cultural values, Somali children and youth may gain the respect of others. But at times some of their peers at school may not want to hang out with them due to differences in values. (After all, people tend to befriend those with whom they share common values and interests.) Cultural differences can also make children subject to uncomfortable questioning. Participants shared experiences of young girls being asked uncomfortable questions,

about their headscarves, for example (“Do you have hair under there?” “Can you shower with that?”). This makes them feel different.

However, Somalis are proud of their culture and believe that there are many traditions and cultural traits that they would like to share with their children and others. One of these is their generosity, their empathy for everyone especially those in need, and their ability to give endlessly. Somalis are raised

to always support and help one another and more so at times of hardship. This does not mean that Somalis are unaware of other aspects of their culture that must be improved. One such aspect is sexism: the overwhelming standards and unequal expectations placed on women relative to men, and the extra scrutiny imposed on women when they fall short or make a mistake, in contrast to the dismissal of mistakes made by men.

Social Environments

Somalis are extremely involved in their ethnic communities. They rarely attend community gatherings outside of the Somali community. Practically every event they attend, whether it is a celebration, wedding, community BBQ, sports event, or religious conference, will be run by Somalis. (In fact, Somalis would sooner restrict their meetings and socializing to their own tribe, let alone to their ethnicity.) Any chance they get to come out and see one another, support one another, and celebrate with one another, they will take, regardless of the nature or location of the event – temples, churches, mosques, weddings, and other such functions. However, certain types of events, such as religious events, have a higher status and tend to be the most popular.

Somalis have a close circle of friends they meet up with. It is actually very simple for Somalis to make friends. The older generation befriends members of its tribe. (Somalis know exactly how many members of their tribe are living in any particular city.) They feel comfortable doing so because essentially they are related to them. Somalis rarely make friends with non-Somali people. Even when choosing friends, they usually stick to Somalis to whom they are more closely related.

Somalis are not as well-informed about Canadian politics as they are about Somali politics. They are aware of their responsibility to participate in democratic processes and the majority of them vote, especially in federal elections. Sometimes, they will take the advice of other community members when deciding for whom to vote. The older or first generation of Somalis always watches the news and rarely anything else. This may be CBC or any other Canadian news channel. To stay in touch with politics and other events in Somalia they also spend their time watching Somali news channels that are broadcast through the Internet.

Somalis do not generally feel discrimination in Canada. Canada is a multicultural country that welcomes people of all ethnicities. Somalis feel that Canadians treat people equally, and with respect and dignity. One common occasion when Somalis feel discrimination is when they are communicating with a representative of an agency or company. Due to their marginal command of English and to their accent, they sometimes feel that they are treated differently.

Although Somalis are an outspoken people, it is very unlikely that a Somali will make a

formal complaint for any reason. They usually just let it go, or even hold themselves responsible. For example, they say that they should acquire a better command of English so they can defend themselves better. Nevertheless, discrimination makes them sad just as it does everyone else no matter what its cause or how it is expressed. Sometimes, it makes them reminisce about life in Somalia where they felt at home despite the hardships. But they also remember that Somalis are a strong people who have dealt with greater obstacles and that Ca-

nadians are a fair and respectful people, despite the odd bad experience.

Somalis feel very safe in their neighbourhoods, and they feel safe living in Canada. They feel safe in their homes, not having to worry about outside threats, a bombing, or a massacre. Like other parents, Somali parents have the usual worries about children's safety – that they will not be struck by a vehicle when playing outside or fall prey to a mentally-ill abductor. But they do not see any imminent threat to the safety of their children.

Family

In their home country, Somalis rarely ever live alone. They live with their extended family. In fact, you don't even need to be part of the extended family to live with a Somali. Somalis are very accepting of others living with them, especially anyone within their tribe. Somalis like to have extended family members come to visit them in Canada. However, many Somalis report that such travel visas are difficult to obtain. The process can take years.

In the traditional structure of a Somali family, the husband is the head of the household because he is the breadwinner and the well-being of the entire family falls on his shoulders. If a husband is not present, then the eldest person in the family or the elder parent is the head of the household. Except for the family head, members of the household have equal rights when making decisions for the family. A man's opinion is not considered superior to a woman's opinion, nor a woman's opinion to a man's. Sibling order does play a huge role regarding responsibility and power in the household. The older sibling is responsible for the rest of the children. His/her responsibilities include, but are not limited to babysitting,

feeding, tutoring, and other such chores.

In Somali families, parents almost always adopt a strict parenting style for fear that their child will stray from the right path. Conflict does arise as a result. The parents believe that the stricter they are, the more successful their child will become, and this may not always be the case. Most Somali children express frustration that their parents are so strict. However, children in Somali communities are expected to show the utmost respect for their parents and elders at all times. Certain behaviours are unacceptable. Children in a Somali family may not talk back, be too opinionated, tell the parents that they are wrong, argue with their parents, or raise their voices when talking to their parents.

Adult children are encouraged by their parents to stay with them until they marry. Somali parents appreciate their children (especially unmarried children) contributing to the household finances rather than spending their money on living separately. In particular, they want their daughters to remain at home until they marry. Young women do not mind living with their parents. Young men, on the other hand, hasten to move out, especially after the age of 25.

It is common for married Somali Canadian children to sponsor their parents to join them in Canada. In the Somali culture, elderly parents are highly respected. No distinction is made between the wife's parents or the husband's parents. Both are welcome to live with the married couple and their children. However, the tradition is that elderly parents are cared for by unmarried offspring. They carry less responsibility since they do not have a family.

Elderly parents are treated with the utmost respect in Somali culture. They have no responsibilities. They have already done enough work raising the family and nothing more is expected of them but to rest. Taking care of elderly parents is the children's privilege. No Somali parents live in seniors homes. In fact, placing parents in an old age home is abhorrent in Somali culture, regardless of one's generation.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Somalis seeking to get married have several options. Somalis are open-minded when it comes to marriage and will allow dating, arranged marriage, and matchmaking – any of these three options so long as it falls within the boundaries of their religious rules. Many Somalis act as matchmakers and find spouses for their friends and families by selecting a reliable person through word of mouth. They will also do a background check to find trustworthy people who know the prospective spouse. These people will then inquire into the status of the prospective spouse. If everything is well and matches their expectations, the selection is made final and reported to the person seeking a matrimonial alliance. However, there are no forced marriages in Somali communities. The consent of both prospective spouses is essential.

Parents arrange marriages for their adult children if they are open to the idea of getting married or have exceeded the maximum age for marriage. (Thirty in Somali culture.) Somali parents do not want their children to reach 31 years of age without being married. If a child does not like the match the parents have found for him or her, the parents will try to find better one, but do not force a child to marry. Ar-

anged marriages can be really problematic if they are forced or are poorly-matched. There are some serious downsides to arranged marriages. Spouses do not get a chance to know the person they are marrying, or if the person is suitable for them. Somali parents are completely fine if their daughter or son selects a suitable spouse for themselves.

The Somali community places a lot of pressure on members to preserve their traditions. Sometimes, people may feel pressured to follow Somali tradition willy-nilly for fear of social ridicule. Somalis are critical of fellow members who have lost their sense of cultural identity. For example, in addition to meeting the religious requirements for a modest dress, a Somali woman should also meet the Somali cultural dress code for women, whether or not she sincerely appreciates it. Younger Somali women wish they could eliminate some parts of the culture, such as its inherent sexism, specifically the unrealistic expectations placed on women. But overall, Somalis appreciate that the community is helping preserve their culture and do not resent the restrictions that their community imposes.

Although Somalis are encouraged to marry within their race, they are fine with inter-ra-

cial marriages so long as both partners follow the same faith. Such interracial marriages are viewed just like any other marriage. Dating is totally fine in the Somali culture so long as the child is old enough to date (over 18). Some parents make it mandatory that the child complete post-secondary education prior to dating. Dating needs to be within the folds of Islam, which seems to be the priority for most parents.

It is rare for Somali parents to disapprove of their children's selection of a mate. Usually, they will be overcome with joy when their child announces that they've found a suitable partner. A Somali parent will only reject their child's selection if such a person does not practice their faith, is a danger to the child, has an unhealthy lifestyle, or is immoral. When the prospective match is a male, he must also be sufficiently financially secure to provide for his family.

The most common issues in a marital conflict relate to finances. Somalis wait until marriage to live with their spouses. So, prior to their marriage, they may not know if they and their spouse are compatible. Sometimes a person will find his or her spouse to be quite different from the way they appeared while dating.

Children and Youth

Somalis endure many hardships and make many sacrifices to give their children a better life. Their biggest concern in Canada is that their children are able to take advantage of the opportunity they have been given by finishing their studies, obtaining a post-secondary education, and getting a job, and thus realizing their full potential. They promote their children's independence to a certain extent. Somali parents want their children to be independent and take responsibility for their lives. However, they also want to feel included in the

A marriage break-up or divorce carries social stigma in the Somali community. Somalis do not like divorce, which is considered the last resort when no reconciliation is possible. The attitude of second-generation Somalis is completely different from that of the first generation. Members of the first generation tend to be more patient. They remain in marriages just to keep the family together despite conflict and unhappiness. In fact, the older generation criticizes the younger generation for taking divorce lightly. The incidence of divorce among the younger generation is far higher than in the older generation.

If there is a divorce, the Somalis will blame whomever is responsible for the wrongdoing. If the husband abandons his family, the community decries his behaviour; if a wife seeks a divorce without a valid reason, the community disparages her behaviour. Unfortunately, like many other communities, the Somalis also put more pressure on the women than on men to keep families together. This is one of the negative aspects of the culture that Somalis need to really change.

major decisions of their children's lives as well: selecting a career, getting a job, and selecting a spouse. A balance between the two is ideal for Somali parents.

A large number of Somali children feel that they have a good relationship with their parents and are connected to them. They do state, however, that misunderstandings may arise between youth and the older generation. It all comes down to perspective. The first generation was brought up in Somalia while the younger grew up in Canada. Thus, they

differ significantly. Many youths believe their parents simply do not understand the everyday challenges they face. These youth are completely disconnected from their parents. The lifestyle chosen by these youth is very different from the one which their parents expect them to have. As a result, they do not see eye-to-eye.

Somali youth often suffer from low self-esteem for several reasons. They are unable to afford the expensive clothing their friends wear. They are not allowed to do certain things due to cultural and religious restraints and because of an accent. No statistics are available about the percentage or number of Somali youth who drop out of school. Males make up the overwhelming majority of Somalis who drop out. Mainly, they drop out to work and make money for the family, or essentially to fill the role of a father who is absent from the family.

Islam teaches that God created women and men in pairs. It recognizes the union of male and female in marriage, where they should live in harmony and advance their progeny. Any deviation from that is generally considered abnormal behaviour in the Somali community. However, Somali parents have no issue with mixed classes or with their child attending public schools. They do have an issue with sex education. Somali parents do not want their children's teachers educating them about which sexual behaviours are permissible and which are not. This, they believe, is the responsibility of the parents. Somali parents want their daughters to dress modestly and their sons to dress appropriately when going to school.

Somalis view education as the number one priority of their lives. Somalis understand how difficult it is to get a proper education in Somalia. They value the free education provided

in Canada and government support for students who face financial barriers to completing post-secondary education. Somalis view this opportunity as precious and urge their children take full advantage of it.

Somali parents want the best occupation for their kids. They did not migrate all the way to Canada for their children to have an average education or an average job. They encourage their children to shoot for the stars, to put their best foot forward and select the highest paying occupation. They do not focus on whether the job is meaningful or whether it gives a sense of fulfillment. Instead they focus on the socio-economic status that a job will give to their children.

Living in Canada, Somali children do feel a clash of values. If a choice must be made between following their free will or pleasing their parents, children usually will choose the latter. They will even refrain from expressing themselves freely rather than display disrespect for their parents. Achieving a balance between expressing their opinion and respecting their elders can be a challenge sometimes, especially since Somali culture puts so much emphasis on respect for parents. In some cases, this may lead to children becoming overly submissive or even timid; in others, children rebel outright and talk back to parents.

Somali youth tend to reject some of their parents' cultural values and heritage. This may include arranged marriages, bearing as many children as possible (not using contraceptives when married), and gendered responsibilities regarding housework and attire. Aspects of their parents' cultural values and heritage that they do accept include the language, food, and music.

Status of Women

Women and men are considered equal in Islam; they are judged equally and have equal status. In Somali culture, however, men and women are not regarded as equal. In a family, the man has more power than the woman. He is seen as the head of the household and, generally, what he says, goes. The reason why Somalis view the man as the leader of the family is that all financial responsibility for the family lies on his shoulders. There are definitely some Somali women who run the household and make all the important decisions. For the most part, however, men dictate what gets done and what does not.

Mothers and fathers will buy things for all their children and expect them all to study diligently. But Somali parents do not treat boys and girls equally in every respect. Mothers tend to favor their sons, especially when it comes to household chores and responsibilities, like cooking and cleaning. In these regards, parents expect far more from their daughters than from their sons. This is an attitude that stems from their own upbringing in Somalia.

The wife does not have the same rights as her husband. In Somali culture her right is to be provided for financially by her husband according to his means and to be treated with respect and dignity. His right is to be cared for by his wife, who should cook and clean for him and look after his other needs. However, the mother has higher status than the father because of the greater sacrifices she makes for their child: she gives birth to the child and breastfeeds, cares for, and nurtures it. Somalis believe their mothers have more rights over them than their fathers do.

About half the Somali women living in Canada work. The rest remain at home and are

taken care of by their husbands or children. Women have fewer opportunities to work than men because men can do any labour regardless of their education or English skills. Somali women, on the other hand, are not suitable for hard, physical labour. Many Somali women do cleaning or healthcare aid work, or similar jobs. If a Somali woman is educated, she will have the same opportunity to upgrade or look for a job as a Somali man with a similar education would have in Canada. However, irrespective of educational credentials, the job opportunities may not be the same for both.

Somali women are not expected to contribute financially to the household as that responsibility belongs to men. If a woman is single, she will have to provide for herself. If she is divorced, the responsibility of the financial well-being of the children is placed on the father. Women usually have their own bank accounts; they know about family finances and how they are allocated. They can spend their income on anything they desire. They can also own property and other assets with their husbands.

Somali women who move to Canada often find that they need to work to provide for their family back home. Their employment does not change their status in the family. If there is an opportunity for them to work in Canada, they sometimes will take the job to support their family members living in Somalia. If a married woman stays home to raise children, her husband may even take on the responsibility of sending money to her family back home.

In marriage, Somali women have the freedom to select their mates. If they are not happy with a prospective match that has been selected

for them, they simply will not marry them and the family will accept their decision. Parents at times may pressure women to get married, but under no circumstances will they make a woman marry anyone against her will. Somali women are not expected to sacrifice their careers or to accommodate their in-laws for any reason. Somali women are not sent off to live with their in-laws after marriage; they either live with their husband or return back to their family.

Physical abuse of women is rare in the Somali community. If a woman is physically abused by her husband, she may leave the abusive relationship or seek help from family members or members of her tribe, who will rescue her. Spousal abuse is not tolerated in Somali culture or in Islam, ideally. Most Somalis will do anything in their capacity to help an abused woman to end such a relationship, whether by providing counselling or financial assistance. Police may be notified depending on the decision of the abused female, her family members, or her tribal members. The community seriously condemns such behaviour and warns the abuser about his wrongdoing.

Religion

The first generation of Somali immigrants views itself as very religious. Most practice Islam and pass it on to the younger generation, which views itself as somewhat religious. The older generation expresses its frustration with the younger generation for not valuing religion as much as they should. The younger generation takes religion for granted and does not give it the commitment that it deserves.

Islam is a monotheistic religion, built upon belief in the oneness of God, the one God, "ALLAH," who is the creator of the heavens and earth, of mankind and animals, and of the

The abuser will be labeled and ostracized from the community.

Women are not forced by their parents to remain in an unhappy marriage, but they are advised to be patient to keep the family together. While divorce is not taken lightly by the Somali people, it does not negatively affect a woman's status, and she can marry another man. Somali men do not view divorced women as inferior, although they may prefer a woman who has never been married before.

There is no conflict between a woman and her aspirations. She is free to achieve her goals in life. If she is married, taking care of children and the household is her top priority. Somali women have the freedom to travel as they wish. They can make friends with whomever they like and date any man who is a practicing Muslim and of good character. However, women are pressured to abstain from any action that would bring shame on the family, such as getting pregnant before wedlock, having sex before marriage, or dressing in a provocative manner.

unseen. It teaches its followers to hold themselves accountable for their actions – both good and bad. Forgiveness for wrongdoing can be sought from the Creator with sincere repentance, but wrongdoers will be held to account for all their actions once they die and leave this world. Therefore, it is important for a Muslim to make it their goal in life to do good, such as kindness, charity, prayers, and gratitude. There are five pillars of Islam: belief in one true God; five daily prayers; fasting during Ramadan; pilgrimage or *Hajj*; and payment of *Zakat* to the poor. If a Muslim performs these

five pillars of Islam, is kind to others, and lives a pious life, he is promised heaven, which is the ultimate lifetime achievement.

Somalis consult physicians for treatment of illnesses. They also use naturopathic forms of medication such as camel's milk and black seeds. Somalis believe that a person's health is in God's hands and that sickness is all part of destiny. They advise a sick person to be patient and that God will reward them for the hardship that they are going through. When a person is sick, they gather and pray to God so that the sick can be healed. Some may attribute illness to an evil eye, or possession by

some sort of unseen being, called *Jinn*. They also consult alternative practitioners who are scholars of Islam, to determine the nature of the illness and/or the cause of it.

Somalis believe that religion brings about wellness in every part of a person's life. Religion helps them deal with grief, betrayal, loss, calamities, or anything negative in life. No hardship or pain that a true follower endures will go unaccounted for. He or she will be rewarded for all their suffering, which is a way to cleanse them of their bad deeds. Difficulties in life are only a way for God to test his creation's piety.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

Psychological counselling would improve the state of Somalis in Canada tremendously. Somalis are skeptical of any form of counselling or therapy. They are not open-minded and do not like trying new things that are outside their culture, which includes therapy and mental health counselling. All forms of mental illnesses exist within the Somali community, including anxiety and depression, but these do not get addressed because they are not recognized as illnesses.

Respect for the client is a prerequisite for successful counselling to occur. A counsellor with an empathetic attitude, who genuinely intends to help the client and can assure them that all information disclosed during the session will be kept confidential, will help to build the client's trust and a sense of comfort.

What makes it difficult to build trust between client and counsellor is the fact that, regardless of ethnicity, people find it difficult to open up to a complete stranger. Besides, a So-

mali cannot imagine opening up to a therapist or seeking any form of counselling outside of the family.

It is not necessary for a counsellor to learn Somali norms of social interaction in order to counsel a Somali client. For example, Somali custom does not require the counsellor to address the male client first. A counsellor can refer to the man or the woman first and also address them by their first names. Sometimes, a male client may be more outspoken than the female client. If this is the case, the counsellor must listen to both parties so that the woman's voice will not be suppressed during the session. The counsellor might politely request that the female be given a chance to voice her opinion. Similarly, parents often may speak on behalf of their children. In this situation, a counsellor might request that the children be given a chance to answer the question themselves and should make it known to the parents that the opinion of the children is also important.

For clients to start sharing intimate personal matters will take time. It is unrealistic for a counsellor to expect a client to share such information right at the start. These topics are going to take time to even touch on. If trust is built between the counsellor and the client, and the counsellor makes the client comfortable sharing about these touchy subjects, there is a possibility that the client will not hold back. Still, this cannot be guaranteed.

Emotional restraint is counterproductive to counselling. A mental health counsellor can do the following to deal with a client's emotional restraint:

1. Understand why the client has chosen to restrain themselves emotionally. This could be the client's culture or the personality type or any of a number of other factors.
2. Educate the client on the negative impacts of emotional restraint in the long term, such as how it can lead to depression or unhealthy methods of coping.
3. Educate the client (especially the male client) that being emotional is perfectly normal. As a counsellor, understand gender differences in terms of emotions. Men consider it a sign of weakness to be emotional, which causes them to bottle things up to appear strong or manly. This explains why more men commit suicide than women.
4. Reassure the client that they are safe to release their emotions during the counselling session and that they will not be judged about how they feel or anything else.

Whether or not a person of Somali origin will be comfortable to discuss issues related to childhood, pre-migration challenges, immigration-related issues, experiences of racism and discrimination, past traumatic experiences, their religion, or sex life, depends on their individual level of comfort. It is not

easy to understand what boundaries a client has set for themselves, or their level of comfort with a stranger, in this case, a counsellor. For example, what one individual may consider private, another one may discuss without hesitation. One client may consider the discussion of finances completely off limits but may be comfortable discussing their sex life. Another client might feel completely the opposite.

Some issues might prevent clients from certain ethnic backgrounds from opening up to their counsellor or from communicating freely. These may include a fear that the counsellor may not understand their cultural values or beliefs or may reduce them to a cultural stereotype. There may also be an apprehension that the counsellor may not respect the client once their weaknesses have been disclosed. Like others, Somali people may also fear being judged or appearing weak in front of another person. Somalis tend to keep their turmoil within themselves and appear fine to the world.

Considering that Somalis do not have access to anyone knowledgeable in the fields of psychology or mental health, it is advisable that the counsellor use their expertise to give direct advice concerning the issues discussed during the meeting. Eliminating any "power differential" in the relationship between the counsellor and the client would be the ideal way to go about counselling.

In their training, many counsellors are taught to have clients from cultures different from their own "teach" them about their culture and the norms, beliefs, and worldviews they hold. This is an excellent strategy as it will help the counsellor better understand the issues that the client is facing and to give advice that is both effective and culturally relevant. The client then will feel better understood

by the counsellor and will not look upon the counsellor as an outsider giving advice based on a totally mainstream perspective.

Counsellors often review a client's history to help the client see how their upbringing has influenced who they are today, both positively and negatively. Somali clients would understand this. Learning about the client's upbringing is key to understanding their issues, because experiences shape people's lives and minds. Somalis would consider it perfect-

ly normal and see it as a way to identify key information that otherwise might prevent the counselling from succeeding. Somali clients may hesitate to disclose information about their loved ones. In such cases, the counsellor can assure the client that such information will not be disclosed to other family members and also that the counsellor will not judge the client's family members.

Author: Fowzia Isse

Chinese Canadians

My Community

“Chinese people are the various individuals or groups of people associated with China, usually through ancestry, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship or other affiliation. Han people, the largest ethnic group in China, at about 92% of the population, are often referred to as ‘Chinese’ or ‘ethnic Chinese’ in English, however there are dozens of other related and unrelated ethnic groups in China” (“Chinese people,” n.d.). Respondents of this project defined the Chinese by their country of origin and its geographical location: the Chinese are people living in the East Asian country of China.

As of 2016, immigrants from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau as well as Canadians of Chinese descent make up about 4% of the Canadian population, or about 1.56 million people. The Chinese Canadian community is the largest ethnic group of Asian Canadians, consisting of approximately 40% of the Asian Canadian population (“Population,” n.d.). Most are concentrated within the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. A substantial majority of the Chinese population living in Canada was born outside the country. As of 2001, 72% of Canadians of Chinese origin were born outside of Canada. Close to 45% of foreign-born Canadians of Chinese origin were born in the People’s Republic of China, while approximately 30% were born in Hong Kong and almost 10% were from Taiwan (Lindsay, 2001).

Chinese immigration to Canada is believed to have started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the Gold Rush era. The early Chinese immigrants worked as labourers building

the Canadian Pacific Railway. Some ran small restaurant businesses or tailor or dry cleaning shops. The majority of immigrants of Chinese origin arrived in Canada relatively recently. As of 2001, 52% of ethnic Chinese immigrants had arrived in the previous decade and another 25% between 1981 and 1990. In contrast, only about 5% had arrived in the 1960s and just 2% came to Canada before 1961 (Lindsay, 2001). For Hong Kong immigrants, immigration mainly started during the 1980s due to Mainland China’s impending take-over of Hong Kong from British rule. It has been easier for Hong Kongers to migrate to Canada than to the United States, which sets fixed quotas for different nationalities, whereas Canada runs on a “points” system. Today, Mainland China has superseded Hong Kong and Taiwan as the largest source of Chinese immigration, averaging over 30,000 immigrants per year or about 15% of Canadian immigrants annually (“History of Chinese Immigration,” n.d.). Much less seems to be known about Chinese immigration to Edmonton. The Chinese population there has grown substantially in recent years. Immigrants from Mainland China have dominated the immigrant Chinese population in Edmonton for the last ten years.

The Chinese in Canada speak either Mandarin or Cantonese. Most project respondents identified as atheists, while a small proportion claimed to be Christian. Although they go to church regularly, especially to churches with services in Chinese, they attribute their conversion to a desire for moral self-perfection and the opportunity for socializing rather than

to a conviction of God's existence and resurrection after death. Many Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong also follow or practice Feng shui, folklore religion, diffused religion, or divination.

There is very little to say about "sub-groups" within the Chinese community other than the Mandarin/Cantonese distinction, let alone any religious subgroup. Mandarin-speaking and Cantonese-speaking people basically can interact with each other without difficulty, because Cantonese speakers also know Mandarin to some degree. Besides, in the workplace they also use English to communicate. Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan are more westernized than people who have immigrated from Mainland China because of the stronger

influence of western political systems and exposure to Western culture. Their differences in language are downplayed, because they all claim a Chinese cultural background. Intergroup marriages are believed to be common.

Respondents expressed their pride in the "3,000 years" of Chinese history, but they are not proud of the current political situation in China. They criticized the authoritarianism, corruption of party officials, moral degradation among ordinary citizens, etc. Some people said that the history of Chinese immigration was depressing. Generally speaking, "confidentiality" is an alien term for Chinese immigrants. They do not trust authorities because of the poor professional standards of law enforcement officials in China.

Immigration and After

People immigrate to Canada for various reasons: they come in search of a better life, or to give their children a happier childhood, a better education, and a brighter future. Some respondents also cited the problems of food safety and air pollution in China, and older interviewees mentioned that they came to join their adult children. No one seemed to have left the country for purely political reasons.

They admitted that they had to wait a long time for permission to enter Canada, but considered themselves lucky to be given the green light finally. The immigrant investor program was believed to take the longest time. Those who sponsored their elderly parents also had to wait longer. Some people remembered a controversy over Canadian immigration practice that had wide repercussions in China in the late 2000s. Officials of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) cancelled hundreds of immigration applications due to a

substantial backlog in their work. Many people were affected, some of whom had been waiting for more than five years and had to re-plan their lives.

All interviewees agreed that the process of departure and re-settlement was stressful. One female respondent teared up when she recalled leaving her child and husband in China. The settlement challenges cited most frequently included the language barrier, lack of Canadian work experience, and cultural differences. Different medical, transportation, and legal systems were also a concern.

Few respondents felt that they had achieved their career goals. The realities of life after immigration are more complicated and challenging than they had imagined before leaving their country of origin. These recent immigrants had to start from scratch. Some said that they are stuck with their positions because the "glass ceiling" makes it very difficult to get

a promotion at work. Others are struggling to get any job at all.

All respondents agreed that the status of one's career is directly linked to a family's financial situation. High stress and anxiety over financial instability can lead to couples fighting and even to dysfunctional families. If the situation continues, it will eventually affect one's health.

Interviewees diverge over the reasons for this sense of unfulfilled ambition. The majority admits that inadequate English puts them at a disadvantage, both in the job market and in the workplace. Lack of previous Canadian work experience also hinders their efforts to land a dream job. But a few females also cited childcare as a major obstacle in their pursuit of a career. One interviewee cited discrimination as a reason for unemployment.

Overall job satisfaction is poor. Of the ten people interviewed, only one said he had meaningful employment. He graduated from

an Ivy League school in the United States and is currently holding a tenured teaching position at the University of Alberta. Immigrants with a poor command of English end up doing low pay, labouring-type jobs.

Most people speak their mother tongue at home, which in this case is Mandarin. But their children – grade-schoolers born here or brought to Canada at a young age – are usually more comfortable speaking English at home, although they understand their native language. All interviewees have a functional knowledge of English for day-to-day living.

Evidently, very few people have no understanding of English. Some elderly immigrants might have more serious language barriers which prevent them from making friends outside their own community. These people are usually accompanied by their children when going to a bank or a clinic. They are usually more isolated from society and more vulnerable.

Culture

Recent Chinese immigrants feel strongly connected to their culture. They identify themselves culturally as Chinese, regardless of their citizenship status. The respondents stressed the importance of staying connected to Chinese culture, because it shaped their understanding of the world and is part of their self-concept and self-perception. Besides, it is the culture of their parents, immediate families, and closest friends. The shared beliefs, values, and memories make them feel connected to those they love and care about. All the respondents use WeChat (the Chinese equivalent of Facebook) to stay in touch with those back in China: their parents, relatives, friends, or former classmates. It is not only a tool to exchange information,

but a way to reduce homesickness and to make you feel more comfortable in the new country.

They all feel that they have changed in multiple ways to adapt to their new environment. Some moms said they had stopped pushing their children so hard to get straight "A's" at school as they used to in China, because the school does not encourage that. Most people said they have adopted a more active lifestyle since they came to Canada. They have learned to fish, ski, and barbeque. They spend holidays and vacations camping or hiking. Others said they have learned to be more open and direct when interacting with people, and to express their opinions candidly. Since China is racially homogenous, people's awareness of racial,

sexual, and cultural inclusiveness is relatively weak. It took some time for the interviewed immigrants to get used to being mindful of political correctness.

A couple of people said that elderly people enjoy more respect in China than in Canada. Here, seniors are treated like everyone else, with no particular privilege. Some said they felt weird when students addressed gray-haired professors by their first names. But the Chinese believe when in a foreign land, one should follow the local customs. As the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” It was also reported that in China you have less chance of being bluntly rejected. In China, people tend to be indirect or implicit when making requests in person, in order to avoid the embarrassment of rejection or disagreement. As a result, to receive a direct, plain rejection from someone else is disconcerting – it is different from the communication Chinese people are used to. Some Chinese immigrants may isolate themselves and only mingle with immigrants with similar cultural background.

They pointed out that Canadian dynamics of social interaction differ from those of the Chinese. In China, the line between family and work is often blurred. Many people have to work overtime, sacrificing family time for no extra pay, and that is deemed “normal.” In Canada, these two spheres are distinctly separated: a colleague of yours is not necessarily your friend as well. If a boss wants someone to work overtime, he asks for their consent before giving an instruction; individual privacy is respected and better protected.

Half the respondents felt that they have achieved a balance between the two cultures and are well-adjusted. However, they are all afraid of their children losing their Chinese culture. Some force their children to speak only Chinese at home. Some send the kids

to bilingual schools where they learn ancient Chinese poems and calligraphy. Most of them take their children to China on vacation so they can meet their relatives and see their parents’ hometowns.

If children forget their mother tongue and get alienated from their native Chinese culture, they lose part of the psychological connection with their parents and grandparents. Besides, when they grow up, they might find themselves confused by the question of “who they are,” because as a “visible minority” even some third-generation Chinese still get perceived as “foreign” by mainstream society. If they do not know their Chinese culture, they will face the conundrum of being neither “really Canadian” nor “really Chinese.” Chinese parents also worry that children who lose their culture might pick up unhealthy lifestyles that may lead to poor academic performance, truancy, gang involvement, drugs, pre-marital sex, and pregnancy.

They feel respected and accepted for their cultural identity in Canada. For example, the celebration of Chinese New Year is covered in TV news reports every year. Some mentioned that when they go to the bank, they have the option of being served in Mandarin. Some say that a few government websites have a Chinese language version. All of these things make them feel welcomed. None of the respondents said that they had felt disrespected for following a Chinese cultural norm.

When it comes to things about Chinese people which they are proud of, all the respondents mentioned the tradition of hard work, which they believe is essential to success. They also said that Chinese tradition attaches high value to family. They believe strong family ties are very important. Some respondents liked the fact that there is a lot of respect for elderly people in China. More than half the interview-

ees mentioned that Chinese traditionally take children's education very seriously and they are proud of that. Chinese are also proud of their martial art (Kung Fu), calligraphy, as well as Chinese medicine and knowledge and dancing. However, they do not like the lack of respect

for privacy in Chinese culture. They also think current Chinese society puts too much stress on career success. They expressed distaste toward the prevailing commercialism and the excessive emphasis on profit and money.

Social Environments

The Chinese community is a big and loosely connected group. There is no such thing as a "Chinese community league." But many stay connected through Chinese online platforms such as WeChat or QQ. Some join social or sports clubs organized by Chinese, for example, the Edmonton Chinese Shooting Club, as well as basketball clubs, volleyball teams, etc.

A notable number of Chinese become Christians after immigrating to Canada. They go to Christian churches regularly on Sundays, both to attend religious services and to socialize, make friends, and share information. Chinese New Year celebrations bring together several thousand people each year to watch live performances and exchange New Year's wishes. As to weddings, because the community is big, not everyone knows each other. People usually attend the wedding parties of people who they know and are close to.

All the respondents have close circles of Chinese friends with whom they keep in close contact. While they may not necessarily meet one another often, they share information (usually through social media), offer help when it is needed, and sometimes spend long weekends or holidays together. Some elderly people like to get together for morning exercises. Project respondents also have friends from the mainstream and other communities.

Those who have Canadian citizenship participate in federal and (less frequently, perhaps)

provincial and municipal elections. Regardless of citizenship status, people are generally interested in discussions about the current political situation in Canada and North America, and also about city planning, especially projects that have direct impact on their everyday lives.

Most people watch Canadian news on TV or read it online, some in English, some in Chinese. They want to stay informed about what is going on every day in this country. Older people tend to watch Chinese channels more because of their limited English language and deeper psychological ties to their native culture. Recent immigrants noted that Canadian news coverage of a political event or incident often takes a different angle from that of Chinese media. Younger people prefer to watch movies in English or Chinese online. Netflix is quite popular among them.

Respondents believed that explicit racism or discrimination against Chinese is very rare in Canada nowadays. None have experienced racial slurs, hatred, or violence. Some reported having encountered mild forms of impatience or unfriendliness, but they are not sure if those were based on racial prejudice. If they are subject to racist behaviours or remarks, they may ignore them or make a complaint, depending on the seriousness of the situation. They feel safe in their neighbourhood, but not in Chinatown or the inner-city area because of people with addictions and the homeless.

Family

China has undergone a radical change in the 30 years since Deng's reforms. People no longer follow the tradition of living with extended family, especially in urban areas. None of the respondents lived with their parents after they got married. But they said a higher percentage of people in rural China live with extended families.

There are many advantages to an extended family. Grandparents can take care of the kids and help babysit them. They can also help make dinner, shop for groceries, pick up the kids from school, etc. When your elderly parents live with you, it saves you traveling to visit them in some other location. Lastly, you seem to worry less about them when you can see them every day. Some of the respondents expressed anxiety over elderly parents who are left behind in China, and said they wish they could have more time to spend with their parents.

The respondents did not have close relatives or family members in Canada to help them settle when they first immigrated here. Some were helped by friends that they had known in China. They visit their families back home every year or every two to three years. Some families managed to bring grandparents to Canada on immigrant visas to live with them. Others have invited or are planning to invite their parents over on visitor visas.

The traditional Chinese family structure dictates that the father, the main breadwinner, is the head of the family whom the rest of the family must obey. It is a typical patriarchal family structure. But such a traditional value is rarely espoused anymore by contemporary urban Chinese, let alone those who, having immigrated to Canada, are exposed every day to discourse on gender equality.

Within the traditional patriarchal family structure, grandparents also enjoyed high authority and respect when it comes to decision-making. Young children had the least power in the family. But in local Chinese immigrant families, the respondents believe, husbands and wives usually have equal rights in decision-making. Grandparents who came here through their children's sponsorship seldom interfere with their adult children's decision-making.

In most Chinese immigrant families, sibling order rather than gender has a role in defining a person's responsibilities. The oldest child is expected to help look after younger ones and to be a role model for them. He/she is also supposed to help the parents do some light household chores.

Most respondents felt that in Chinese immigrant families stricter parenting is more popular, although some said the opposite is true. All the interviewees said they had experienced conflict between themselves and their kids to various degrees, especially teenage ones, where the parents felt the children did not listen to them or disobeyed them, and the children felt annoyed by the parents' "nagging" or felt parents treated them unfairly. Children in Chinese families are expected to listen to their parents' advice and take their constructive criticism. Talking back and arguing in a loud voice when being criticized is considered disobedient. Some parents also said it took a while for them to adjust to Canadian standards of parenting, which do not permit spanking children for wrongdoing.

Some adult children sponsor their parents to immigrate to Canada, and in this case, they live with their parents. It is quite common to sponsor parents to come live with the family. Among the respondents, the percentage of

families living with the husband's parents, the wife's parents, and without grandparents is the same.

Those who do not or cannot sponsor their parents' immigration live some distance from them. Grandparents want to be around their children and grandchildren, but they also express skepticism about a "really harmonious" extended family. There can be more problems and conflicts when several generations live together.

Elderly parents are cared for by their adult children. These seniors help the family by offering their advice, preparing meals, sharing

household chores, sending the kids to school, or picking them up from school. If the children refuse the advice, the seniors usually accept it peacefully. The elderly people interviewed for this project said they understand that their children already work hard to make sure everyone is satisfied, so they have no complaints. Usually the wife or daughter-in-law is responsible for taking care of elderly parents at home. It is not uncommon for older parents to live in seniors or nursing homes. Family members may not have time to take care of the seniors, especially when their health deteriorates and they need long-term care.

Marriage and Marital Relationships

Some of the respondent couples married for love and some through arranged marriages. Arranged marriages are still common. Young people usually look for a date by themselves, but when they seem unable to find anyone suitable, their parents or good friends often try to hook them up with some candidates that they consider a good match. The children then go on a blind date. The children's consent is necessary in this case.

Parents try to arrange marriages for their children mainly because they worry about their children's future lives. For example, if they have a daughter over 30 who is still single, the parents are going to worry that she might have missed her prime time for marrying someone suitable. The mother may even feel some sort of guilt for her daughter's singlehood. They want to help her, but if the child does not like the matches they make, they cannot force her into a marriage. She will have the final say.

One of the problems with arranged marriages in Canada is that you have a relatively

small pool to choose from, since most Chinese marry Chinese. Besides, in an arranged marriage romantic feelings often have to be subject to social and economic constraints. Since the two people in an arranged marriage may not know each other's lifestyles and values, they can end up constantly in conflict. This may lead to family violence and eventually some couples divorce.

There is little pressure from the community to follow outdated matchmaking traditions. People make use of matchmaking only for someone in search of a marriage partner who cannot find a good one by themselves. Some eligible single persons even ask their friends to keep their "eyes and ears open" for possible dates for them. Apart from the family members of the single person, no one would push for a marital arrangement.

It is common for young people to date and select their own spouses. But interracial marriage is very rare, even among second-generation immigrants. Such marriages are viewed as normal, without prejudice, although some

respondents expressed concern over cultural differences between interracial marriage partners. They were not sure if the differences would affect the marital relationship. Naturally, if parents do not approve of their children's selection, there will be conflict. The children will probably consider their parents' opinions and suggestions, but the children have the final say.

Marital conflicts may take place over issues of "properly matching" income, age, or fam-

ily background. Most respondents assumed there would be less conflict in marriages in Canada. Divorce or break-up is sad and bad, but not seen as a social stigma in the Chinese community. Each divorce case is unique; one cannot necessarily say that the wife or the husband is "always" more responsible for the break-up. People's attitudes toward divorce changed long ago. Their opinion of divorce is now much more tolerant and rational, or "westernized."

Children and Youth

Many Chinese parents worry about bad influences in school to which their children might get exposed. For example, there may be some bad friends with drug addiction. Some also worry about teenage pregnancy and teenage rebellion. The respondents thought critical and independent thinking should be cultivated in both boys and girls in order to develop a leadership spirit in them. Some said probably half the parents feel that their adolescent children are close to them; some said the number must be lower, maybe around 30%. The interviewees made random guesses as to the percentage of children that feel they are close to their parents (from 50% to 70%).

The interviewees believe that feelings of inferiority about their country of origin may be a major reason for lower self-esteem among some Chinese immigrant youth. Some teenagers who are recent immigrants may be self-conscious about their Chinese accent. The fact that their parents don't know English very well and have difficulty integrating into the mainstream society may also make them less confident about themselves. However, they do not think Asian teenagers worry about their

non-Western look very much. The teenagers may express concerns over their skin condition or certain facial features, but that is more about individual traits rather than something race-related.

The respondents said that they had never heard of the school dropout rate among Chinese youth, and that it must be very low. (Some said it must be less than 5%.) They agreed that teenage pregnancy could be a serious obstacle to continuing school.

Chinese youth identifying as LGBTQ are not likely to share their sexual orientation with their family, because they are probably unsure of the parents' response. To most Chinese parents, homosexuality is still something abnormal. But eventually, the parents have to give in, because if they love their children, they want them to be happy. In Canada, with Chinese immigrant parents learning more and more about LGBTQ, their attitudes towards gay people are also gradually becoming more tolerant and open-minded.

The respondents believe that Chinese parents are not likely to have problems with school uniforms, mixed classes, or sex edu-

cation. Chinese society is highly secularized. The parents' liberal attitude in this aspect may influence their children, so that in the future the children will also tend to be open to the aforementioned issues.

Education of the children is extremely important to a Chinese family. The Chinese believe that a university degree will not only help a child achieve higher social status, but improve his/her chances of finding a spouse with a better education, higher income, and so on. And of course, with a university degree one is more likely to earn a higher income, which, in turn, will make the parents proud.

Chinese parents are usually actively involved in their children's schooling. Most interviewees admitted they are very involved. Only one respondent said that he is not concerned whether or not his children achieve top marks, so long as they are happy and become honest, law-abiding, respectable citizens. Chinese parents might persuade their children to choose a secure, prestigious occupation, but they also

know that a person's passion is crucial to career success. The respondents said they probably would let their children pursue a career personally meaningful to them, even if it was less secure or prestigious. However, as parents, they might not do so willingly.

In immigrant families, sometimes there may be a clash of values: personal sacrifices for other family members versus personal choices; emotional self-restraint versus free expression of feelings and emotions; deference and respect for elders versus self-expression, critical thinking, and questioning. Such situations are very difficult and children do feel a clash of values. They either fight or yield, are passive or aggressive, depending on their personality.

The aspects of their parents' cultural values and heritage that youth want to keep are their Chinese language and names, as well a Chinese cuisine, national costumes, and Chinese holidays. What they do not like is their parents' extreme frugality. Some of them also think their parents push them too hard to attain academic success.

Status of Women

The respondents thought that basically, women and men are treated equally in Chinese culture, in the sense of "equal work, equal pay." But when looking for a job, men have better opportunities for getting hired. It is believed that in most Chinese immigrant families, boys and girls are treated equally: they receive equal love and care from the parents; they have equal access to available resources; they have equal rights to developing hobbies; and they have an equal opportunity to receive school education. In most cases, the husband and wife have the same rights. The female respondents said they did not hear of complaints about do-

mestic gender inequality and cannot think of any rights that are preserved exclusively for the father.

It was estimated by the respondents that within Edmonton's Chinese community, probably 70-90% of women are working. As to job differences between men and women, many men are hired as labourers and heavy-duty workers. More women than men find jobs in retail and day care. About half the respondents thought that women have the same opportunity as men to pursue a better job. The other half said women are at a disadvantage in the job market, for they have to commit

much more time to childcare and family than men do.

Most interviewees believe that women are expected to contribute to the family income, especially if the family is experiencing financial constraint. A couple of interviewees said they do not mind if their wives choose to stay home to take care of children or to be homemakers. All the female respondents said that they have their own bank accounts and have full access to the family income. They are aware of how family finances are spent or invested – their opinions in this regard are even sought after. They are joint owners of family properties and other assets and exercise equal rights in terms of financial decision-making. If they need to spend a large amount of money, they prefer to discuss it with their husband first. The same is true with the husband. If he wants to spend a large amount of his income, he needs to first discuss it with his wife.

Some women may not have worked in their country of origin. However, when they come to Canada they start working due to the family's financial needs or availability of the right opportunities. The interviewees said they believe that a change in a wife's income will bring a change, big or small, in her status in the family. A person's financial situation always plays a part in the influence he/she can exert.

All project respondents, male and female, expressed a firm belief that women have the right to marry the person of her choice. If a woman happens to like the person her parents have selected for her, she should marry him; otherwise, she cannot be forced into a marriage.

Modern Chinese women prefer to live separately from the in-laws, because life with in-laws can be difficult and rife with conflict. The extended family tradition dictates that a

daughter-in-law should respect and obey her husband's parents in every respect, which is hard to take for many urban Chinese women. It may happen that some women choose to sacrifice their careers in order to take care of the in-laws, but it is considered uncommon.

In Canada, it is not uncommon for Chinese immigrant women to seek help against an abusive spouse. The help usually comes from their close friends, or from agencies and the police. Community members usually do not intervene. The victim will not choose to tell her problems to a stranger simply because he/she happens to be Chinese. The respondents did not think that women should be expected to tolerate abuse, nor should their families discourage them from seeking help. In the view of the respondents, the Chinese community as a whole is largely unresponsive to abuse cases.

In Canada, Chinese immigrant women who pursue a divorce usually get support from lawyers or legal service centres. In many cases, their parents and in-laws live in China and therefore have little influence on the women in question. Even if living together with adult children, parents and in-laws in immigrant Chinese families have little power over such children.

Recent female immigrants noticed how the image of an ideal woman differs in China and Canada. In China she is portrayed as pretty, quiet, innocent, patient, and fragile, whereas in Canada she is strong, independent, sporty, intelligent, and responsible. Young girls naturally want to pursue the Canadian ideal, which their parents usually support. Respondents said they want their daughters to adopt local values and beliefs which will in turn help the girls assimilate more easily into mainstream society.

Religion

Most Chinese immigrants in Canada probably identify as atheists, the respondents said, because they were brought up in Chinese schools which taught atheist ideology. Some respondents said they go to a Chinese-speaking church on a fairly regular basis. Some elderly participants identified themselves as “somewhat religious.” Others said they do not really care about the church’s religious teachings, what they like is the opportunity to meet friends and to socialize. The rest of the interviewees identified themselves either as “atheists” or “agnostics.” Many senior Chinese believe in doing good deeds in this life to prepare for the after-life.

The respondents believe that religion can be beneficial. Faith gives people hope and inner peace, and it encourages them to live a virtuous life. But the respondents themselves identified mostly as non-believers. Some of them admitted that their thinking might be influenced by some fragmental Buddhist ideas of karma, but they do not believe in Buddha and said it just might be superstition on their part. People also believe in curses and bad luck and seek psychic reading. Since most Chinese are atheists, they do not believe that illness is a result of past karmas. When sick, they turn to doctors, not to priests or pastors.

All respondents viewed religion and spirituality in a positive light. They said such things cannot bring harm to people. If you are a believer, the faith can give your life a clear purpose. They said they have noticed that in Canada, Christian church-goers are usually nicer than average people, probably because they have more hope in their hearts. An uplifting, optimistic spirit can contribute to people living a healthier life. But on the other hand, concepts like “hell” and “karma” don’t necessarily help people when they are sick. Even knowing all the benefits a religion can provide, the respondents said, they still cannot really believe in the existence of God or Christ’s resurrection. Many of them were invited previously to various Bible study groups, and a couple of them were even converted to Christianity.

Apart from hospitals and clinics, it is quite common for Chinese immigrants to also go to practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine who provide massage, acupuncture, or cupping therapy. People generally believed that Western medicine is powerful for the surgical removal of sick parts or organs, while Chinese medicine is good at nursing unhealthy people back to normal over a long term. Some people will seek advice from fortune-tellers and Feng shui specialists.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

People need psychological counselling to alleviate their short-term pain or sorrow, or to help them fight some chronic mental issues. One respondent turned to psychological counselling for anger management and another

for depression. One couple said they once went to a psychologist when they could not resolve the family dysfunction themselves. They hoped that they could get some advice from the counsellor.

A respectful and trusting relationship between a client and counsellor is essential for effective counselling. Clients want their problems to be heard. So a good counsellor should also be a good listener. People usually turn to counsellors at a tragic or difficult time in their lives. They want empathy – they want to be sympathized with and comforted. If the counsellor treats the patient in a respectful, friendly, and empathetic way, it will help them build good relationship. The environment of the room should be calming and pleasant, and convey a message of security and confidentiality. It takes time to build trust. For most Chinese, counselling is a western concept; people are not used to revealing their deep inner feelings.

Certain things can make it difficult for a client to build respectful or trusting relationship with a counsellor. An untidy appearance would not help a counsellor build a trusting relationship with a client. The counsellor should not interrupt the patient too often. Instead, he/she should hear the patient out. If the counsellor's diagnosis is remote from the patient's state of mind, he might lose faith in the counsellor's competence.

In terms of the culture-specific requirements for an interaction, most respondents said they are fine with the counsellor addressing the head male first, addressing adults before children, and using formal names. But they will feel weird if the counsellor does not make direct eye contact, or only shakes hands with men and not the women. Some said using respectful names will make the atmosphere very formal, which will not encourage the patient to open up.

In many cultures, family matters or intimate personal matters are not discussed outside the family. Mental health issues are often deeply connected to these subjects. It will

be very beneficial for the counsellor to understand the client's situation and personality in order to suggest appropriate strategies. All respondents recognized the necessity to disclose intimate personal details to help the counsellor to design a better treatment plan. They said they would be willing to do so if necessary.

Similarly, in some cultures, emotional restraint is considered better than self-expression or open discussion of emotions and feelings. Effective counselling may depend on an exploration of emotions and feelings. It is understandable for a counsellor to request that clients reveal their deep-seated fears and anxieties. But trust can be built over time, and the same goes for a sense of connection. It probably takes multiple sessions for a patient to reveal what is deep inside. Besides, sometimes the patient may not be aware of a fear or anxiety that is deeply buried or repressed through a kind of self-censorship. The counsellor needs to explore it through careful questioning. Counsellors can also try to address the issue indirectly, and say for example, "Some people that I counselled had such-and-such an issue in their marriage. Do you think this may apply to your situation too?"

It is also important for a counsellor to understand how comfortable the clients are discussing the following subjects, if they relate to their presenting issue: childhood; pre-migration challenges; immigration-related issues (e.g., fear of losing immigration status); experiences of racism and discrimination; sexual orientation or other matters related to their sexual life; religion; and traumatic experiences in their past. Most respondents believed that traumatic experience could be the most difficult to share with others, because the process of recollection can itself be traumatic. Half of them said sexual orientation would be a

difficult issue for them to talk about if they were LGBTQ. Almost all said they are open to talking about childhood, pre-migration challenges, immigration-related issues, and experiences of discrimination.

Most respondents thought that cultural differences would not be a big issue in psychological counselling. Some said people everywhere share the same human nature, and that is what counts. Others said that when you talk to a counsellor, you offer your version of the story, and naturally you will explain the cultural values which are involved. They do not really worry about losing the counsellor's respect or facilitating cultural stereotypes, reasoning that understanding human weaknesses is part of a counsellor's job description.

Whether a client wants the counsellor to provide clear "advice" or to work out the problem on their own with the counsellor's help, depends on the client's personality and the nature of the psychological issue. If the patient is seeking to cure the problem "once and for all," he/she would tend to demand "clear advice." But many problems are treatable, even if they cannot be completely cured. In this case, it would be better to get the patient involved in the exploration of his/her own mental world (although such patients might well tell the counsellor that they know themselves all too well).

Many counsellors believe in equalizing the power between therapist and client, rather than holding a position of power in therapy. Many respondents find the idea of "equalizing power" between therapist and client quite appealing. Before going to a therapist, they said, patients probably have some ideas or opinions about the issue. Unconsciously, they may think that no one understands them better than they

themselves do. So a therapist who appears to try to impose his/her own ideas might negatively affect the therapy. Still, at the same time respondents acknowledged that the purpose of a counselling is to help, guide, and lead a person out of trouble.

Many counsellors are trained to ask clients with cultures different from theirs to "teach" them about this culture and the client's norms, beliefs, and worldviews. The respondents said they do not mind telling a counsellor from a different background about Chinese customs and values, and they do not think cultural differences need pose a serious problem to successful counselling. Some said they have some concerns about the success of counselling if the therapist knows nothing at all about Asian culture.

Counsellors often review a client's history and help the client to see how their upbringing has influenced who they are today, both positively and negatively. Sometimes, clients may not feel comfortable with this. It would involve identifying the negative aspects of their upbringing or family members. However, it is important for a counsellor to know how to review the client's past and negative family experiences while remaining respectful of the client's loved ones. The respondents agreed that it does bother a patient to shed negative light on his/her loved ones, and it can be painful. However, they could think of no solution to the conundrum. Some said that it is just part of the price you have to pay. Others said if the counsellor helps the patient to see the issue in a rational, non-judgmental way, the patient may learn how to live with the fact of an imperfect family.

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Polish Canadians

My Community

Polish people are a Slavic nation living mostly in the territory of the Republic of Poland, though there are big communities (called Polonia) in other countries as well. According to the Canadian 2016 Census, there are 1,106,585 Polish Canadians. Approximately 55,000 Polish people live in Edmonton.

Polish people immigrated to Canada in many waves: 1854-1901, 1902-15, 1916-39, 1944-56, 1957-79, and 1980-93. People that came in the first two waves were usually families from villages and small towns in the territory occupied by Austria. Most of them settled in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. One of the biggest waves was between World Wars I and II (over 100,000 Polish people). Another big wave happened between 1981 and 1993 (about 119,000), mostly because of the economic and political crisis in Poland. In recent years there has not been any substantial growth in Canada's Polish population.

Polish people speak the Polish language. Most Polish Canadians identify themselves as Roman Catholic; others are Protestants, Orthodox Christians, and followers of Judaism. There are other sub-groups as well, mostly determined by language. Two of the several dialects in Poland are Silesian, spoken in Upper Silesia, and Kashubian, widely spoken in the north. Despite differences in language, sub-groups still interact with each other. Usually, people who use dialects also know the official language.

Poland has a long and difficult history. It was established in the early middle ages. Duke Mieszko I, considered the creator of the Polish

state, adopted Western Christianity in A.D. 966. In 1025, Bolesław Chrobry formally reconstituted Mieszko's Duchy of Poland as a medieval kingdom. In 1569, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was formed. It was prosperous at first, but from the mid-17th century it began to decline because of destructive wars and the decline of its political system. In the 18th century, significant internal reforms were introduced, especially in the Constitution of May 3, 1791. However, because of neighbouring powers, the reform process did not advance.

Invasion by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy, and the subsequent partitions of Polish territory, brought an end to the independent existence of the Commonwealth in 1795. Until 1918 strong Polish resistance movements operated. The nation preserved its identity through educational initiatives and a program that was designed to modernize the economy and society.

After World War I Poland had a chance to regain independence. In 1918 the Second Polish Republic was established, but Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union destroyed it in their invasion of Poland in 1939 at the beginning of World War II. Just under 6,000,000 Polish citizens died during Nazi occupation. A Polish government-in-exile was active throughout the war and the Polish people contributed to the Allied victory through participation in military campaigns. After the war a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union was established, known from 1952 as the Polish People's Republic. Re-defined Polish lands largely lost

their traditional multi-ethnic character through the extermination, expulsion, and migration of various ethnic groups during and after the war. In the late 1980s, the Polish reform movement, Solidarity, played a big role in achieving

transition from a communist state to a capitalist economic system and a liberal parliamentary democracy. This process resulted in the creation of the modern Polish state in 1989: the Third Polish Republic.

Immigration and After

There has not been extensive Polish immigration to Canada in the past two decades, although some people immigrated because of economic and political crises in Poland. Currently, a larger number of tradesmen are being attracted to Canada by its higher wages. For professionals, like doctors or lawyers, it is more difficult to immigrate because of the difficulty of gaining recognition of Polish qualifications in Canada.

Immigrating to Canada has had its own challenges for Polish people, particularly the long process of immigration and difficulties in visiting home. Even now some immigrants have to wait for two years before they can start working. One of the biggest settlement challenges for Polish people has always been the language barrier, especially for the first immigrants who did not speak English well or at all. Their isolation coupled with missing home and family made it even worse. And then there were the everyday challenges of life: finding a new place to live; inability to find a job despite a university degree and experience; inability to drive because Polish driver's licenses are not recognized.

However, like all other immigrants, Polish people work hard to achieve their goals and most feel contented with their life outcomes. Of 175 people surveyed, 69% said that they feel satisfied with their career status in Canada. They also feel that they have been able to achieve their goals and have meaningful

employment. But then there are those who do not feel the same way and often suffer from a sense of failure that may affect all aspects of their lives. To live in that state is difficult financially and emotionally and may result in stress, leading to depression and other health problems. Relationships suffer as well. For some, the language barrier is the main reason why they could not achieve their goals; for others, it is the fact that their educational credentials were not recognized after they immigrated. It would have taken too long and cost too much money to get their credentials assessed or to upgrade. There was not much they could do about it. Some have adequate credentials and still are not able to get a suitable job. Permanent residents with foreign degrees are less likely to get good jobs than Canadian citizens with a Canadian education.

The younger generation, especially newcomers who are in Polish-Canadian marriages, speak good English. But the older generation do not speak English very well; they mostly speak Polish at home. This makes it very difficult for them to find a suitable job or deal with a critical life situation where they must talk to the doctor, police, or defend themselves in court. Sometimes an interpreter is available, which makes things easier for such people. Still, that does not empower them or increase their self-confidence.

Culture

Although the Canadian and Polish cultures are very similar in most ways, Polish people like to stay connected to their own culture. They cook Polish dishes, watch Polish TV shows, go to Polish parties, and celebrate Christmas and Easter with Polish traditions. It is part of who they are. All this is important to maintaining their cultural integrity. However, Polish people also like to incorporate the traditions of both these cultures when celebrating holidays. It is not very common to celebrate Hallowe'en in Poland, but a lot of Polish people that live in Canada celebrate it, especially when they have young children.

About 85% of Polish people feel that overall, they have achieved a balance between the two cultures and are well-adjusted. They are

not afraid that their children may lose their culture because they really try to teach them about their heritage by sending them to Polish schools, cooking Polish food, or visiting their home country.

Polish people are usually respected for being well educated, hard working and very hospitable. They feel proud of these qualities. They value family and faith. Polish people have had to fight for freedom several times in their history. That has made them very proud of who they are. The part of Polish culture that some may not fully appreciate is that Polish people are not used to living close to other cultures, as Poland does not have a great cultural diversity.

Social Environments

Most Polish people, especially the older generations, like to be around other Polish people. There is a Polish school in Edmonton, a Polish Hall where different kinds of events are organized, a Polish dance club, and many Polish Catholic churches. Polish people participate in community events, like Easter or Christmas at their parish or dances at the Polish Hall. The majority have a close circle of friends, though the younger generation has more friends from other communities as well. They go for a coffee together, celebrate events together and talk to each other, especially when they miss Poland and friends and families back home. They are involved in politics, they like to talk about it and often compare it with the politics back home. The older generation likes to watch Polish TV shows,

although they watch English sport programs or movies as well; younger people like to watch English TV shows mostly, especially on Netflix.

Very few Polish people feel that they have experienced discrimination. Those who have experienced it either ignored it or discussed it with their friends. It made them feel bad, as if they did not belong, and was hard to forget. Most Polish people feel safe in their neighbourhoods, though they try not to walk around when it is dark and they make sure their homes are locked.

Family

Back in Poland, some young people live with their parents even if they are working. Some newlyweds cannot afford living on their own. Although living with parents is not very common anymore, even when people do live on their own they still stay in touch with their families. Grandparents usually help with children and around the house, especially when both parents are working. Those who do not have an extended family in Canada have many disadvantages. Usually the people you can count on the most are your family members. Without them, you have to do everything by yourself. Having extended family also helps with the budget, especially when people have young children. Some people immigrate with their families but younger people usually immigrate by themselves, and try to visit their families back home as much as they can.

Polish society has become very democratic, and both men and women can be the head of the family. However, the man is still considered the head in some families. In such families, generally wives are stay-at-home mothers and the financial responsibilities are handled by the husbands. In family interactions, the parents usually have the most say. Children's opinions are taken into consideration, but the last word belongs to the parents.

After the parents, the oldest siblings have an important role to play. They are usually responsible for their younger siblings. They are expected to take care of them when parents are not around. They are expected to set a good example for their younger siblings. In modern families, the parenting style is more lenient. Parents are not expected to be authoritarian and instead treat children as friends. In more old-fashioned homes, parents are usually

more controlling. Some children are not as respectful and some even rebel against their parents. In Polish society, children are expected to show respect for their elders. For example, they do not interrupt when elders are talking and let their parents know where they are going and ask for permission, especially when they are still in school. Children are also expected to respect their parents' decisions. Focusing on their studies and doing their chores are considered admirable qualities in a child.

As noted earlier, some adult children live with their parents before they get married, since at the beginning of their careers they sometimes cannot afford to rent an apartment, or they want to save money. However, it works well for both parties. Living with parents, children do not have to spend money on rent or food. Parents get the company of their children and feel needed and involved in their children's lives.

Some people sponsor their parents to come live with the family in Canada, especially when parents become grandparents. But not all people want to move to Canada in such cases. There is a saying in Poland, "You don't replant old trees." As people get older, it becomes more difficult for them to adapt to a new environment. In addition, this older generation does not speak English very well since in their time it was not taught in schools. As a consequence, they fear being dependent on their children and not being understood. However, children may not consider them a burden as elderly parents usually help a lot with raising their grandchildren. It is not very common in Polish society to leave parents at a nursing home. People who do so are considered ungrateful children.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Couples usually marry after being together for a while. Young people decide who they want to marry. There are no arranged marriages in Polish society. There is not much pressure to follow traditions either, except perhaps in going to church. Traditions are followed out of the desire to do so. Children become used to going to church because they were raised within those traditions. People are glad that they can share their traditions with others.

It is common for young people to choose their own spouse, who, at times, may be of a different race. Many interracial marriages take place in Polish communities, and on the whole they are viewed positively. In rare instances, someone from the older generation may show some displeasure. When parents do not approve of their children's selection, it usually strains the parent-child relationship. Most

children value their parents' opinions and will take them into consideration but would make the final decision themselves. Issues in marriages can arise when parents get too involved in the lives of newlyweds or when spouses work too much and too long and do not have time for their families. Finances can create problems as well. When there is not enough money, there is more stress and it results in conflict.

There is no social stigma associated with divorce. Older generations would still view the wife as the person most responsible for avoiding marital conflicts and would expect her to endure unfair treatment at the hand of the spouse for the sake of the children. In modern relationships, both sides are held equally responsible.

Children and Youth

The primary concerns of parents regarding their children would be safety, especially the safety of their daughters (as girls are more in need of protection), as well as getting a good education and job. As parents, they sometimes end up stifling their children's independence due to concern about their well-being. Most parents feel that they are close and connected to their children, and most children also feel the same way. They visit each other, invite each other to dinners or to celebrate important events together. They also help each other with financial or other needs.

Polish youth may feel embarrassed by their parent's language or accent and their meaningless jobs. Some youth who identify with the

LGBTQ community feel unsure about their parents' reaction, but people are more open about these gender issues than they once were. Polish parents are generally open-minded and do not have any problem with school uniforms or mixed classes.

Education is viewed as an asset in Polish society. Parents are happy when they know that their children have a better chance for a successful future. It brings them pride and joy. Parents are very much involved in the education of their children. They help them as much as they can. Most parents will let their children choose their own career, but some will try to convince them to pursue careers that are considered more prestigious than

others. Polish children usually do not feel a clash of values as there is not a big difference between Canadian and Polish values. Some

children like to have English sounding names, but most will want to keep their cultural traditions, like Christmas.

Status of Women

The Constitution of Poland upholds the equality of men and women, and society also considers them equal. However, men still tend to earn more money than women. One reason for this may be that most men work longer hours. Women, being the primary caregivers, take more time off to raise the family.

In families, parents and other family members treat girls and boys equally. They both have the same opportunities. Mothers and fathers also have the same rights. Most women work, except for those who have very young children and have decided to stay home for reasons of caregiving. Women and men have the same employment opportunities and an equal chance at promotions. Women have financial freedom and most have their own bank accounts as well as joint accounts. It really depends on the family. They also know about the family finances. They can spend their money the way they wish, but they consult their husbands about bigger expenses. Some Polish women may not have worked prior to arriving in Canada. But after finding employment in their new country, such women gain more confidence as well as more respect from the family because of their newly acquired earning potential.

Women in Polish society cannot be forced to marry someone against their wishes; they marry of their own choice. When a woman lives with her in-laws, she takes into consideration the in-laws' needs. Sometimes a woman will sacrifice a career to take care of her in-laws or her children. Such decisions

are usually made by the woman herself. At times, these decisions may be driven by financial factors.

In cases of spousal abuse, some Polish women seek help, while others suffer in silence because they are ashamed of being victims of abuse and do not wish to disclose it. They may be unable to seek help if they are financially dependent on their spouse. Some seek help from their parents or friends, but some do not hesitate to seek help from the police or other service providers despite the challenges of the language barrier. Polish women find the agencies and the police in Canada willing to help and supportive. In some poor and less educated families, women may stay in abusive relationships for the sake of their children. But Polish society does not expect its women to tolerate abuse and comes to their support in this unfortunate situation. Divorce does not affect a woman's status.

Young women sometimes see a conflict between the traditional roles of a woman and modern expectations. They want to take care of their children, but they also want fulfilling careers. In modern Polish societies, no one perceives these two ambitions as conflicting and most women find it possible to combine both roles.

Religion

Most Polish people would consider themselves as very or somewhat religious, as Poland is considered a Catholic country and religion plays a big part in people's lives there. However, some young people are seen to be falling away from the church. The basic tenets of religion as Polish people follow it would be those taught by the Roman Catholic Church: Faith, Hope, and Love. Most of them believe in life after death. The most common practice would be to go to church every Sunday for mass and to pray every day. Illness is perceived as a natural part of life, but faith helps people endure

it. People believe in God's plan for their lives and that He will make something good arise from illnesses and other hardships of life. For Polish people, religion and spirituality contribute to living a healthier life. They believe that God wants them to be happy and leading a healthy lifestyle is part of that. It also helps them during difficult times as they can talk to God in prayer as if talking to a friend. This helps them mentally and emotionally and results in better overall health. It is not common for people to go to alternative medicine practitioners for health-related issues.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

Psychological counselling can be helpful in times of stress and anxiety that are often connected to immigration. Sometimes people feel ashamed that they are sad or anxious when they are supposed to be happy. Counsellors would be expected to help people deal with feelings of anxiety. Some Polish people feel extremely guilty that they decided to immigrate to Canada for their own good while leaving their families behind in Poland, which would be seen as an act of selfishness.

To build a trusting and respectful relationship, counsellors should listen without judging and try to understand their client's situation, culture, and religion. Some things can make it difficult for a client to build respectful or trusting relationship with a counsellor. For example, if the client does not speak English very well, or was convinced to get counselling but does not really want to open up or is angry

about the situation, s/he may take it out on the therapist.

It is important that the counsellor knows at least the basics of the patient's culture. A lot of people would be willing to talk about their family or other intimate personal matters, but they would have to feel that they can trust the counsellor and feel comfortable around them. Most Polish people would reveal their fears and anxieties if they felt that the counsellor would understand them and help them by asking the right questions. Most issues could be discussed with a trusted counsellor, but those concerning sexual life or traumatic past experiences would probably take time. After a few visits, when a client feels comfortable with the counsellor, s/he would open up about more complex situations and issues.

What would prevent people from opening up to the counsellor would be the fear that

the counsellor would not understand them or help them resolve the issues. Some people expect the counsellor to give them advice, but in some cases, in order to be more effective, people have to work things out on their own (with a counsellor's help). Equalizing the power of the therapist and the client and would make people trust their counsellors more and feel more comfortable and relaxed. It would give them the feeling of being in control and not totally dependent on the counsellor.

Most Polish people would not mind sharing their culture and beliefs. In fact, it would make them more comfortable: once the counsellor knows more about the client, she/he will be better able to help them more effectively. It would be difficult to bring up negative experiences, but a counsellor who is supportive and non-judgmental would make the process much easier.

Author: Katarzyna Cuvilier

Filipino Canadians

My Community

Filipinos are people who grew up in or came from the Southeast Asian country called the Philippines. In Edmonton, there are 42,525 Filipinos — 3.3% of the total population. The 2016 Canadian Census states there are 837,130 people of Filipino descent living in Canada, most in urbanized areas. This number grows yearly because of the more liberal immigration laws currently being implemented. Canada only had a small population of Filipinos until the late 20th century. The years 2011-2016 saw a 26% spurt in that population, a growth rate more than twice that of Canada's general population (5%).

The Philippine constitution declares Filipino (Tagalog) the national language of the Philippines. However, it is actually a bilingual country, with Tagalog and English as its official languages. There are also other regional languages. Depending on the definition of terms, there may be between 120 and 187 dialects or languages spoken in the Philippines.

Filipino sub-groups have been determined primarily by language, as people would bond

over a common dialect or language they are naturally more comfortable with using at home. Any major difference between them is usually based solely on language, but this does not hinder groups or individuals from interacting, socializing, and even establishing intimate relationships with each other. A typical Filipino, especially one who did not grow up in the National Capital Region, would be fluent in at least two Philippine languages: Tagalog and a regional language, such as Cebuano, or Hiligaynon.

Due to three centuries of colonization by the Spaniards, it is a predominantly Catholic community. While about 90% of the population would identify as Christian, about 5%, especially those hailing from the southern regions of the Philippines, would identify as Muslim. Important to note is that the Philippines was colonized by three countries: Spain, Japan, and the U.S.A. This has paved the way to a complicated, colourful, and diverse culture that combines East and West.

Immigration and After

Filipinos immigrate to the Western countries like Canada because of a desire to live in a First World country. Despite the risks and the fact that home and loved ones are far away, living and working in another country usually means a better life. Filipinos working here in Canada and sending money back home are usually more than able to provide for their

families. An hour at minimum wage in Alberta, for example, is equivalent to a day's worth of work in an office in the Philippines. Monetary reasons and the promise of a better life are therefore the main reasons for the influx of Filipinos into other countries.

For most Filipinos, especially those who initially came here with a working visa, the

process is wrought with sacrifice and a lot of waiting. Working visas are not granted without contracts that bind them to their employers for years. This means years of working without going home to loved ones. Happily, for some, after fulfilling their contracts they are eligible to apply for permanent residence for themselves and their families.

Some of the challenges newcomers to Canada face have to do with the drastic difference in weather. The Philippines is a tropical country, and Canada is temperate. Another challenge is finding a place to live, as they would normally prefer to be someplace with easy access to fellow Filipinos who can help them settle in.

The majority of the Filipinos who come to Canada are not satisfied with their careers here relative to their educational qualifications from the Philippines. A classic example of this would be nurses. They are one of the most important imports from the Philippines. Some licensed nurses come to Canada and first have to work at some other job, such as a nanny, caregiver, or licensed practical nurse. The road to licensure can be long, difficult, and expensive. A lot of them, though, ultimately achieve their goal by gaining full licensure and working here as nurses.

When the road to full licensure becomes too much, it can affect other aspects of life. This can bring about stress which in turn can lead to health issues. Relationships with family and friends can become strained. Finances would be impacted, of course. Gaining licensure here in Canada or equivalency training is expensive, even more so if converted to Philippine pesos. Sometimes these incidental costs reduce the amount of money that can be sent home.

Language barriers, inability to upgrade, financial difficulties, family responsibilities – all

are reasons for someone not to achieve their goals. Some Filipinos cannot pass the language requirements or get the required score in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Sometimes their credentials are not recognized. Sometimes it is the cost, as licensure costs an exorbitant amount. Sometimes it is simply because other priorities take precedence.

Those who were able to transition to the equivalent of their degree from the Philippines would most likely say they have meaningful employment, a job that they love. But the majority of Filipinos here work in jobs that nobody else wants. As long as they are earning what they expected and are able to send some of their income home, they usually will not complain about it.

The majority of Filipinos speak Tagalog at home. Most of the time, even children born and raised here have a working knowledge of Tagalog as their parents are usually big fans of TFC, a channel with telenovelas, shows, dramas, and news from the Philippines. English being another language in which most Filipinos are fluent, it enables them to work in service and the health industries.

Five percent of Filipinos suffer serious language barriers. Even that figure might be too high. Before most of them come here with either a working visa or as an immigrant, they are required to take the IELTS as proof of their grasp of the English language. This is so employers are assured they can communicate effectively, as most of them are hired to be part of the service, hospitality, or medical industries.

Culture

Filipinos for the most part are proud to be Filipino. They never hesitate to reveal their heritage, and sometimes are even ready to declare it without first being asked. They get homesick quite easily, so it is very important for them to be connected to their heritage, especially when it comes to food and entertainment. Hence, lots of Filipinos subscribe to the aforementioned TFC channel. They also cook Filipino food all the time because they really want to maintain the diet they had back home.

Filipinos normally adapt well to Western culture, primarily because their culture is already heavily influenced by it. The last country to colonize the Philippines was America, and so America's influence is quite heavily felt in a lot of aspects of life. But, there are still some aspects that have not changed or where change is quite gradual. Dating is a good example of it.

In the Philippines, women are "wooed" by men. When they go out on "dates," there can sometimes be a chaperone. The man is expected to pay for everything, and it may take a long time before a woman can confirm that she is in a relationship. Marriage proposals here in Canada are between the people who are in a relationship. In the Philippines, men have to ask for the blessing of the parents of the bride-to-be before proposing.

There would be instances where Canada's more westernized culture would clash with that of old-fashioned Filipinos, or those raised with old-fashioned values. Dating may be frowned upon, as is pre-marital sex, although that is slowly changing. (Millenials are now more liberated and open-minded on this issue.) Filipinos are resilient and quite adaptable. Hence, their culture is not significantly differ-

ent from mainstream culture. Filipinos find it easy to strike a happy balance between the culture of where they are, and the culture of where they are from. The percentage of people who feel that they generally have achieved a balance between the two cultures and are well-adjusted would probably be in the high 80s to low 90s.

Fear that the younger generation may "stray" from their culture is not prevalent in the Filipino population. Since they get homesick so easily, they take the steps necessary to remind them of home, like cooking food, celebrating holidays, and vacationing in the Philippines whenever they can afford to. These steps necessarily inculcate their children with the culture.

Children who end up straying from their culture may become alienated from their family. Filipino customs and traditions play a big part in making families tight-knit. It does not mean people get ostracized, though. Generally, blood runs thicker than water. Children can always usually fall back on their families for help whenever they need it.

Generally, Filipinos are fiercely proud of their cultural identity. Once they find out about a certain achievement of a Filipino, they will take pride in that person, even if they do not personally know him/her. So it is easy to find cultural acceptance for even a little achievement. However, because they are fiercely proud, they also can be easy to offend sometimes. An interesting example of that would be an interview in which a certain (Chinese-American) celebrity said she did not like to get tanned because she did not want to be "mistaken for a Filipino." She faced a huge backlash for that statement.

Aspects of their culture of which Filipino families are most proud and always teach the younger generations and others are faith, love of family, respect for elders, and the value of hard work. One cultural aspect that a Filipino would want to change is punctuality. There is a thing we call “Filipino Time,” where people arrive very late for an appointment or regular get-together. Being in a country with a very different approach to time and its management has opened the eyes of most Filipinos as to how they should value other people’s

time. However, most Filipinos are now very self-conscious about this and take extra care to be on time.

There is also this belief that men should always be the family breadwinner. Philippine society is still very patriarchal. Being in a Western society has empowered a lot of Filipino women because their rights are upheld here. So numerous women are now the main breadwinners of their families or are very independent and doing well on their own without having to depend on a man.

Social Environments

Filipinos like to keep in touch with other Filipinos, so they have a tight-knit community wherever they are. They like to help each other out or organize activities that will reinforce their relationships with each other. A lot of Filipinos are also quite religious and very active members of their church organizations. They actively participate in social functions, so they can be with friends, family, and acquaintances. Any reason for a party, whether it be birthday, wedding, christening, or any other occasion, will likely be received with a lot of enthusiasm and fanfare. This also gives them a good excuse to prepare and eat their favourite Filipino dishes.

Most Filipinos have a close circle of Filipino friends. Filipinos without families here end up living with each other too. They support each other by being stand-ins for family. They will also have friends from other communities. Generally, however, their closest friends are Filipino, who grew up in and understand the culture and values.

They also participate in politics, but not as actively as they should, perhaps because they end up comparing politics here to politics back

home. Philippine politics is riddled with controversy and corruption. For decades, politicians, because of their power and influence, have been notorious for circumventing the law. Canadian politics is more transparent, and politicians pay for any infraction just like any other citizen. So the distrust with which Filipino-Canadians view their representatives sometimes is shown by their disinterest in political participation.

The majority of Filipinos prefer watching their own ethnic channels so they are up to date on news from the Philippines. They are usually hooked on watching what are termed “teleseryes” (television series). They also like watching primetime shows. They are fond of English or mainstream movies and sports as well.

Almost every Filipino has probably experienced discrimination. While it is easy to get offended, it rarely escalates into violence. Filipinos take the high road in reaction to racism or discrimination. They also know how to laugh it off and make light of it. It is part of the culture to think that the person who easily loses their temper is the loser in an exchange.

Their reaction and approach to discrimination is usually passive-aggressive. This means that the individuals experiencing discrimination will be offended, hurt, and angry, but probably will do nothing about it unless absolutely provoked, which generally leads to violence. Filipinos will take the abuse, but only to a certain extent, and when they fight back, they fight to win. There is a historical example of this. Under colonial rule Filipinos took abuse for three centuries. They bided their time, until they could not take it anymore, and then launched an effective rebellion.

I also remember seeing a video of a Filipina being verbally abused by a Canadian woman three times her size. The Filipina initially sat silently through the abuse. Then she told the other woman to stop. The other woman instead resorted to finger-pointing. When the Filipina again asked her to stop, the other woman began poking her. At that point, that Filipina had had enough. She stood up suddenly and started viciously punching the other woman in the face. The Canadian never even had the chance to fight back. Even though I cannot condone physical assault for any rea-

son, I would recognize this as a typical Filipino response to any kind of abuse.

In the Filipino psyche abuse acts more as a reinforcement of the positive than the negative, in my opinion. The way Filipinos assess and react to situations is quite unlike other cultures. If they remain silent in a verbal exchange, for example, it is because they think you are beneath them. Engaging with you is not worth their time and effort. At some point they will laugh at your loss of control. They will not forget it, though, and will hold a grudge. A lot of Filipinos I talk to think that discrimination and racism is a sign of insecurity. So in the long run it affects them positively.

Regarding how safe or unsafe Filipinos feel in their neighbourhood, note that the Filipinos are generally a suspicious people, having come from a country where crime is rampant. It is hard to get that out of your system. Most Filipinos feel safe in their neighbourhood, although they still take precautions to ensure their safety. Out of habit they lock the door or set alarms, make sure windows and doors are closed before leaving, or anything else prudent.

Family

Extended families are very common in the Philippines. Economically, it also makes sense. Extended families help offset the cost of living and also provide the comfort and reassurance that comes with living with loved ones. A lot of newlyweds for example, like to live with parents or in-laws while trying to establish a good career. Young adults live with their parents. Childcare is very rarely a problem with extended family around.

Living with extended family may be difficult for people who grew up in other cultures,

especially people who were raised to be independent and do not feel comfortable having so many people around. They either hate it or love it. It is usually up to the Filipino partner to find a balance between their spouse's needs and wants without hurting the feelings of the extended family.

With the influx of Filipino immigrants in the past decade and the liberal government's relaxation of immigration policies, most Filipinos coming to Canada already have close relatives here to help them in their settlement.

Whenever the opportunity arises, the vast majority of Filipinos still opt to do their travelling and vacationing back in the Philippines. That is the only way to alleviate their homesickness. The lure of the beautiful beaches back home and the chance to reconnect with other friends and family is too hard to resist. But they always jump at the chance to apply for immigration for themselves and immediate family. That way they get the best of both worlds.

Most Filipino families are externally patriarchal but internally matriarchal. Although most men are considered the pillar and head of the family, they value their wives' opinions. Women thus play a very influential role, especially when making decisions on major issues. They also have a firm hold on the family finances or shared bank accounts, so nothing happens without their knowledge or say-so.

In addition to the parents, the eldest child normally holds a powerful position in the Filipino family. This is part of the Filipino tradition of respecting one's elders, which applies even to siblings. The younger you are in the family, the less influence you have over other family members. The eldest child is generally tasked with serving as a stellar example of behaviour to their younger siblings. Their primary responsibility is to be a role model and also to be a stand-in parent when the actual parents are not around. There have been many instances of families losing both parents, whereupon the eldest child takes up the mantle of both father and mother to their siblings.

Filipino parenting is very typical of that found in Asian households. Most Filipinos raise their children autocratically. Discipline of children usually serves to reinforce the innate trait of respect and consideration for one's elders. It also tightens family bonds. So there is seldom a conflict between children and parents regarding parenting style. Rebellious outbursts

may occur every now and then, but eventually they subside. Children come to see discipline from the point of view of their parents, as something done "for their own good."

Obedience and respect is manifested by greeting elders and addressing their elders properly. The classic example would be *Mano Po*. This is actually a Filipino tradition wherein an elder blesses a younger person. The one who is receiving the blessing bows their head, takes the right hand of the elder, palm-down, in their right hand, and places it on their forehead. Another example is the expectation that younger generations always address older siblings as *Ate* or *Kuya*, aunts and uncles as *Tita* or *Tito*, and grandparents as *Lolo* or *Lola*, with a "po" after each statement.

Some families have adult children living with their parents. This is a very common practice even when these children themselves marry and have children. Parents expect children to reciprocate the care given to them in childhood by taking care of those caregivers (their parents) in their old age. There is a culture in which parents are expected to provide for their children until they reach adulthood. A lot of parents pay for their children's college education, unlike Western countries, where parents are not really expected to do so. For the most part, Filipinos with high-earning jobs and post-secondary degrees owe their degrees and livelihood to their parents. Hence, they pay this back by taking care of their parents at home instead of leaving them in a home for the aged. For Filipino seniors, the very thought of being left by one's children in a home for the aged is a nightmare.

It is very common for Filipinos to sponsor their parents to visit or live with them in Canada. It all depends on whether the parents are willing to brave the weather or climate, to miss their friends and everything they are used to,

and to bear with over a day of travel. If both husband and wife have parents willing and able to brave the trip, they take turns.

Elderly parents, especially those who are mentally sharp and physically fit for their age, are usually very influential in the family. They usually help families with watching the children, cooking, and cleaning. It is uncommon

for them to go to nursing homes because the children who leave them there gain an unsavory reputation among their peers for ingratitude. Around the world Filipinos are known for being compassionate and caring, that is why the majority work as nurses. These traits are of course even more visible when they take care of family.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Marriages in the Filipino community usually take place after the couple has courted and been together for a while, and after they have secured the blessing of both sides of the family. Years before, when the Philippines was under Spanish rule, arranged marriages were quite common and consent from the children was seldom sought. Some variations of arranged marriages still exist, but they are not very common. Over the past few decades, Western culture has deeply influenced this aspect of the Filipino culture. So now, dating and marriage are comparable to how young couples from modern societies do it – by personal choice.

The reasons behind arranged marriages in days gone by were usually financial or political. Children were not given much of a choice when it came to choosing their partners and thus sometimes ended up marrying total strangers. In such marriages, if a child does not like the spouse chosen for them there is not much they can do about it. Refusing the match would usually mean losing privileges or an inheritance, or being shunned by the family and becoming fodder for gossip because of the shame and dishonour they had brought upon the family.

Arranged marriages in Canada would be viewed as a contravention of the basic human

rights that Canada offers its inhabitants. I do not know of any Filipino family that has arranged a marriage for their child. As far as Filipinos are concerned, their children can, and usually do, end up choosing a great person to marry given the right guidance.

The Filipino community does not impose a lot of pressure on its members to follow traditions. The likely reason for this is the happy-go-lucky nature of most Filipinos. Traditions are followed mostly out of a personal and inherent desire or tendency to do so, not because of pressure from the community or even family. Most Filipino families have managed to strike a balance between maintaining Filipino traditions and adopting Canadian traditions. In general, Filipinos are proud of their culture and traditions. They help preserve them within their community and like to showcase them to their friends as well. This works out well because Canada is a good country to be in when it comes to ethnical and cultural diversity.

Nowadays interracial marriages are also quite common. Such marriages are usually viewed and accepted enthusiastically, since most Filipinos think interracial children that are half Filipino are beautiful offspring. As a matter of fact, Filipino celebrities, beauty queens, and models are almost always interracial. When parents do not approve of their

children's selection of spouse, it usually makes for a very strained relationship. Most Filipino children value their parents' opinions, though. They rarely maintain relationships with someone of whom their parents do not approve. As mentioned earlier, the expression "blood runs thicker than water" is applicable to most Filipino families.

The most common issue leading to marital conflicts in Filipino families living in Canada would be infidelity. Awareness that their rights are upheld here has emboldened a lot of women to stand up for themselves and take some of their issues to court. Personally, I believe these issues are more common in the Philippines but seldom brought to court there because wom-

en's rights are not as respected. Also, such processes are long, emotionally draining, and very costly, which makes it difficult or impossible for most women to pursue them.

There used to be a stigma attached to divorce or separation. But this attitude has changed because both have become so common. In addition, it is apparent that with the support and resources available here, the outcome is not as bad for the children as most people used to believe. I would say that the stigma still exists that wives are responsible for keeping the marriage intact—whatever problem they have with their husband, they should just take it, forgive, and move on especially for the sake and well-being of the children.

Children and Youth

A primary concern of Filipino parents is their children's health and safety. As parents, they sometimes end up stifling their children's independence to keep their safety from being compromised. This applies especially to daughters, since females are still considered more fragile physically than males. This attitude is readily apparent when you observe Filipino parents in the playground. While other parents tend to relax a bit and let their children explore the playground by themselves, Filipinos watch their children closely. They will advise their children not to climb because they might fall and hurt themselves. If they do let their children explore a part of the playground, they will stay close by in case something happens.

The vast majority of Filipino families are tight-knit and have close relationships with each other. Parents usually know their children's friends and their whereabouts. Even as adolescents, most Filipino children are still being close-

ly watched by their parents, and their activities monitored. This makes it difficult for them to do something without letting their parents know, so they seldom get into trouble with the law.

It is normal for adolescents or teenagers to have insecurities about their appearances or their families. In the long run, though, this is easily overcome by Filipino youth as they come into adulthood and self-actualization. This is because of strong family support and ties. When someone receives unwavering support from family and friends, it is hard not to be proud of them or even look up to them.

As is typical of Asian families, Filipinos strongly encourage their children to do well in academics and to value education. As such, they are very supportive of their children's endeavours in school. As a result, the school drop-out rate in the Filipino community is quite low. Canada also has established many institutions to provide social support to its citizens. As most Filipinos here have established

lives despite modest incomes, they are able to provide for their children's needs and wants, especially in terms of education. Consequently, the incidence of teenage pregnancy is also almost non-existent.

People who identify as LGBTQ can sometimes be teased, bullied, or ridiculed, but it seldom gets to the point of ostracization. Even in the Philippines the stigma attached to being LGBTQ has been lax. A lot of young people are quite open about their sexual orientation because consequences for revealing it are not all that dire. Depending on the circumstances, it may even be fully accepted.

Filipino parents are used to class structure. They do not have problems with school uniforms, which are customary in schools in the Philippines. Mixed classes and sex education are not an issue, either. The bottom line is this: as long as Filipino parents think their children are learning something important and beneficial, it is not a big issue. Their opinions, especially strong ones which they are very vocal about, may be a source of embarrassment or trauma to children. But such children will seldom do anything about it, because to them, their parents are the authorities.

Filipino families definitely view education as a valuable tool. It is a stepping stone to a successful career and higher social status. Nothing makes Filipino parents more proud than when their children excel academically. They encourage their children to pursue professional careers, like doctors, lawyers, and accountants. The parents prefer to work menial jobs while raising their children, in order to see them graduate from esteemed institutions and obtain high-paying jobs.

Parents are very much involved in the education of their children. They always encourage them to steer clear of meaningless jobs and instead work at prestigious, high-paying

jobs. They look down on menial jobs which are stigmatized as befitting people who did not get a good education.

A clash of values is all but inevitable for children growing up between two cultures: making personal sacrifices for other family members versus personal choices; emotional self-restraint versus free expression of feelings and emotions; deference and respect for elders versus expressing one's opinions, critical thinking, and questioning. The conservative, sometimes antiquated values of their Filipino parents would be so different from the more open-minded, modern approach of Canadian parents. They would feel and see the stark difference between their upbringing and that of their peers. Sometimes I believe it makes them insecure. But a lot of second- and third-generation Filipinos have found ways to balance what they have learned with how they were raised in these surroundings, so they can thrive and excel in either environment.

Filipino youth want to keep many aspects of their parents' cultural values and heritage, and many others they tend to reject. Arranged marriages have definitely become a thing of the past, as well as discrimination against women and that annoying habit of being late. The values of respect for elders, hard work, and dedication have been passed on. A lot of Filipinos vacillate between using Western names and traditional, Filipino names. Most of them just give their children the former and use the latter as nicknames. Religion and faith is also aspects of their culture that Filipinos are keen to pass on to their offspring.

Status of Women

As previously stated, Filipino culture is externally patriarchal but can be internally matriarchal. This sometimes plays a part in the different ways men and women are treated. While men and women are equal in terms of rights, a lot of practices heavily imply that men are superior. Also, there is a tendency for Filipinos to have double standards that do not favour women at all. For these reasons, I would say it is unequal, mostly in favor of men.

Although both girls and boys are accepted by the families, most families prefer boys. For the rich and privileged, they need a boy to carry on the family name. For the poor, boys (because people assume them to be physically stronger) are better able to perform hard work. Does a wife/mother have the same rights as a husband/father? Based on Canadian law, one would answer, “yes.” Filipino law, by contrast, heavily favors men. For example, men in the Philippines are allowed to have as many as four wives if they can afford it. No such law exists for women. Also, there is no such thing as child support in the Philippines. Even if a woman is in an abusive relationship, she is stuck with it for life, because there is no divorce there.

It is common for Filipino women to work and earn an income. As long as they are legally entitled to do so and have convenient daycare, women work. Filipino women usually shy away from hard labour such as construction or in the oilfields. Most of them work in the service or hospitality industry. Those who have degrees and equivalencies can be found working in healthcare as nurses, aides, or clerks. Here in Canada they definitely have the same opportunities as men to upgrade or get an education to suit their preferences.

Women are not really expected to contribute to the family income, but they do so willingly because of the abundance of opportunities here to earn money. Usually, married Filipino couples have joint bank accounts. In these cases the women not only have access to their husbands’ income, they in fact control it and do the budgeting. Once couples are married they naturally exercise joint ownership over major properties and assets. In addition, a couple’s financial decisions are almost always a joint effort, while each spouse may still spend money individually.

Once a woman starts contributing financially to family income, there is a subtle change in her status or standing in the family. She is entitled to have a say in how money gets spent, when, and where. For the same reason, when you earn money for yourself, you start to value yourself more: it boosts your self-respect, dignity, and confidence.

Filipino women are now very aware of their rights in Canada. So they definitely emphasize to their families that they can marry whomever they choose and not be forced to marry against their wishes. Whatever threats their parents make, such as losing an inheritance, have little bearing, since women can earn their own money instead of having to rely on their parents. However, this does not mean that their parents’ opinions would have no value at all. Women usually still try to get their parents’ approval or blessing before settling in with their spouse.

When a wife lives in a household with her in-laws, it can make for a complicated living arrangement. This usually means her needs are secondary to those of her in-laws who are senior and “further up” in the household hierarchy.

chy. Such wives sometimes do have to sacrifice their careers and personal choices to take care of the family and in-laws.

When living with an abusive partner in Canada, it is more common for a woman to seek help once she realizes that she is being abused. Women in these situations usually turn to family and closed friends, but they do not hesitate to contact the police. They know these resources will take them seriously and sometimes are available for free. The community can be very supportive – they understand too well that these resources are not readily available in the Philippines. At first the accused abuser will be generally given the benefit of the doubt. But if he gets labeled “wife-beater,” a lot of people will start avoiding him.

Decades ago, Filipinos liked to pretend that the abuse of women did not exist even if it was prevalent. Nowadays, Filipino women are not expected to tolerate abuse, especially in a progressive country like Canada. They are now better educated and aware of their rights. The stigma surrounding women who seek help and leave abusive relationships is gradually dissipating. Not only are women better supported in their decisions to stand up to abusers, but also in all the difficulties they subsequently face.

While seeking a divorce, women usually seek

support from organizations that aim to provide specific services, such as legal aid, counselling, and social support organizations. Parents of the victim take the side of their child, of course, whereas in-laws normally take that of the perpetrator. But this usually depends on the situation and the people involved. Divorce can sometimes affect a woman’s social status, but nowadays with the stigma gradually disappearing, women overcome it. They end up living better lives and showing people that in certain situations, divorce cannot only be the sole option but the better option as well.

Young women sometimes see a conflict or disparity between women’s traditional roles (caring, nurturing, pure, and self-sacrificing) and their modern identity, or between individual aspirations and modern expectations. Traditional training placed on women a greater responsibility to do household chores and work. Nowadays, because of the availability of appliances that make housekeeping and food preparation easy, household chores are taught to both girls and boys, hence reducing the burden of expectation on girls. This establishes a certain amount of freedom and equality. Similarly, both boys and girls are expected to avoid actions that may bring family shame. Girls may be judged more strictly than boys, however.

Religion and Approach to Health

The Philippines is the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia. Roman Catholicism plays a major part in Filipino culture. It is safe to say that a lot of Filipinos would consider themselves very or somewhat religious at the very least. The basic tenets of their religions would be those taught by the Roman Catholic Church: Faith, Hope, and Love. Most of them believe in life after death. The most common

religious practice for them would be to go to church every Sunday for mass, and to pray every day. These practices are easily incorporated into their everyday lives here in Canada. The ultimate achievement for them would be to live an eternal life after accepting Christ as their saviour. Filipinos look to their faith and spirituality for a moral compass. Going to church and listening to sermons reinforces

in them values that they should hold dear and pass on to their children. With a strong moral compass, they are able to say that they are spiritually well and this contributes to their feeling of general well-being.

Illness and disease are now approached from a very scientific point of view, as most Filipinos work in healthcare. Some of the older generation still revert sometimes to folklore and traditional remedies and the use of herbal medicines. But for the most part, medical attention is sought for illnesses. In the Philip-

pines, it is very common for people to seek what are called *bilot* or *manggagamot* (healers). Although they have no formal training, they are sought because of their skill in getting rid of illnesses or maladies by combining the supernatural with the natural. However, because of the scarcity of such practitioners here in Canada, and because of the education most Filipino-Canadians have been privy to, all health issues are taken to medical professionals to be diagnosed and treated the scientific way.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

Psychological counselling can be helpful in times of great stress or emotional upheaval. Speaking personally, a counsellor would have helped me discuss my feelings, address my confusion, or express my hurt and grief during my divorce.

A respectful and trusting relationship between a client and counsellor is essential for effective counselling. One thing that counsellors can do to build respectful and trusting relationships with their clients is to practice empathic listening. It also would be very important to really understand the situation from the client's point of view. For a lot of people it is hard to find someone who will really listen and see things from their point of view. Counsellors who are true to their words are really helpful. When they say they are going to help, and do not renege on their word, it gives clients a sense that there are trustworthy people out there. Transference often makes it difficult for a person to build a trusting relationship with their counsellor. This is when emotions meant for an abuser (mistrust and anger, for

example) are unconsciously redirected at a substitute, usually the therapist.

I think that for any interaction involving different cultures, it is important to establish a good rapport from the start. This is achieved by having an idea beforehand of social behaviours that denote respect and consideration. For some people knowing these differences between cultures is not a big issue, but it can make a big difference between a mutually beneficial and successful therapeutic relationship, and an unsuccessful, unproductive one.

In many cultures, family matters or intimate personal matters are not discussed outside the family. However, they are often deeply connected to mental health issues. It will be very beneficial for your counsellor to understand your situation and your personality to suggest appropriate strategies. Part of the reason some therapeutic relationships do not succeed is because of the lack of total disclosure and trust. Not a lot of people are willing to disclose information about themselves and about their family unless they have some semblance of

trust for their counsellor. It takes time to build that trust. Most people would be willing to discuss personal issues and stories once they trust the person in whom they are confiding. I think, though, a lot of people would be willing to confide because they know their rights and they know that confidentiality will not be breached. As well, they would want to resolve their issues as soon as possible.

Similarly, in some cultures, emotional restraint is considered better than self-expression or open discussion of emotions and feelings. Effective counselling can depend on an exploration of emotions and feelings. Filipinos would not be averse to revealing deep-seated anxiety and fears when they understand that the purpose of such a request would be to help them identify their triggers and demons, and ultimately help them come up with ways to overcome them.

Filipinos will be comfortable discussing the following with their counsellor if they are related to a presenting issue: childhood, pre-migration challenges, immigration-related issues (i.e., fear of losing your immigration status), experiences of racism and discrimination, sexual orientation or other matters related to their sexual life or religion, and traumatic past experiences. However, these issues are very sensitive and may not be discussed during the first visit with the therapist and not unless they have a vital and immediate part to play in the therapeutic process. Specifically, anything sexual can be uncomfortable to discuss, but all it might need is time.

The only factor that might prevent most Filipinos from opening up and communicating freely with their counsellor would be the fear that he/she cannot help them resolve their issues. That their counsellor would not understand their cultural values or belief systems, or would lose respect for them after knowing

their weaknesses, or apply a cultural stereotype to them – none of these fears would be insurmountable. Once they know that the counsellor can help resolve their issues, they will not have any problem disclosing any details about their lives.

In some cultures, people look to counsellors as figures of authority and expect them to offer direct and clear “advice” rather than supporting a client to work things out on their own. Most Filipinos would like to have some “advice.” This will help them to navigate confusing situations and choices, and consider from a more objective perspective the possible consequences of their decisions. There are things that they would rather work on themselves, but it would help to have someone point the right way to go sometimes.

Many counsellors believe in equalizing the power between therapist and client and not holding a power position in therapy. This would make me feel more powerful. I am fully aware of what is going on with me and also how to resolve it, possibly by myself. Equal power would definitely encourage me to continue receiving counselling, as it actually gives me the independence and tenacity to manage myself.

In their training many counsellors are taught to have clients with cultures different from their own “teach” them about their culture and the norms, beliefs, and worldviews they hold. This is a good way to establish rapport. Sharing their culture would make client feel comfortable. Also, there is value in learning about a culture’s norms, beliefs, and views. This would explain human behaviour and reactions.

Counsellors often review the clients’ history and help them see how their upbringing has influenced who they are today (both positively and negatively). Clients may feel uncomfortable with this, knowing that it involves voic-

ing the negative aspects of their upbringing, family members, etc. However, it is important to have full disclosure in therapy, whether it is negative or positive. This will help to develop explanations about the root cause of the problem, and solutions to it. For the counsellor, the key is to make sure they are not judgmental in

their reactions and approach and keep an open mind. This is how a counsellor can review a client's past and the negative experiences they have had with family and also make the process respectful to their loved ones.

Author: Veron Gaban

Coptic Canadians

My Community

Arab culture is extremely diverse and includes several countries and faiths. The following discussion summarizes the traditions and beliefs of Coptic people.

The Copts are “an ethno-religious group indigenous to North Africa who primarily inhabit the area of modern Egypt, where they are the largest Christian denomination in the country” (“Copt,” n.d.). Copts are also the largest Christian adherent group in the Sudan. According to the CBC News, the 2006 census found that in Canada, 54,875 people identified themselves as ethnically Egyptian. The Canadian Coptic Association, however, estimates that there are currently about 35,000 Copts living in Canada. If other sects with strong ties to the Coptic community are included, the figure possibly would be higher. The largest concentration of Canadian Copts is in and around Toronto (“Coptic Christians in Canada,”

2007). According to the 2011 Edmonton Census, 1.7% of Edmonton’s population is Arab. Considering the fast-changing demographics of Edmonton in the past decade, it is reasonable to assume that this population must have significantly increased since 2011.

“The immigration of the Copts to Canada might have started as early as the late 1950s. Due to the increasing discrimination toward the Copts in Egypt in the 1970s, many decided to emigrate in order to escape the rising racial tensions. The number of Coptic immigrants into Canada has been growing ever since” (“Coptic Canadians,” n.d.), resulting in a substantial increase in their population in recent years. The Copts speak Arabic and follow the Coptic Orthodox Christian Faith. Within the Coptic Christian community there are no linguistic or religious subgroups.

Immigration and After

There have been numerous wars in the Arab countries, both civil and tribal. Egypt and Sudan have a rich history, but religious discrimination in these countries is widespread. Many Arab countries are also politically unstable. Among the members of this group who responded to this survey, 25% cited religious persecution as the main reason for the immigration of Copts to Canada. Others also mentioned a “better life” for the family as an equally strong motivating factor for Copts’ decision to immigrate to Canada. The respondents’

idea of a “better life” includes political stability, peace, better education, and a better health care system, among others. Half the respondents thought that the immigration process was long and tiring. Others did not find the waiting time as challenging as the complicated procedures of filling out forms, gathering all the required documents, as well as dealing with bureaucratic red-tape in the process.

After immigration to Canada, Coptic people find the cold climate, cultural differences, and insufficient knowledge of the English lan-

guage to be their major settlement challenges. Most have problems finding jobs as their educational and employment credentials are not recognized in Canada. Financial constraints and adaptation to the new and unfamiliar social structure are also major transitional challenges. Respondents referred to the oft-quoted paradox where one needs Canadian work experience in order to get a job, but first needs a job to get that experience. Family responsibilities, language barriers, and cultural differences were cited as major obstacles preventing newcomers from upgrading and securing meaningful employment. Lack of job and financial instability can often lead people to depression and low self-esteem. However, most respondents thought that 60-80% of Copts in Canada have been able to secure meaningful

employment despite the initial challenges and are satisfied with their achievements here.

Most Copts speak Arabic at home, but the majority have a functional knowledge of English to manage their day-to-day lives. A few respondents estimated that 20% of Coptic community members may be suffering from serious language barriers, but most thought it must be less than 10%. They all agreed that the language barrier can severely impact people's lives, their sense of safety and well-being and belonging. As examples they cited situations where parents cannot talk to their children's school teacher, people who cannot go out alone, cannot call the police when worried for their safety, or cannot discuss pressing health concerns with a doctor.

Culture

Most respondents said that they feel strongly connected to their ethnic culture and religion. They want to make sure that they stay connected to their church and learn the ethics and rituals that it teaches. The church is considered by the Copts a very important place that keeps the community together. People go to church to worship together and celebrate many religious and cultural events. It is an important place for its members to socialize, share information, and stay in touch with other community members. However, some respondents also said they feel more connected to Canadian culture than to their own Coptic culture.

Copts are open-minded people and many respondents thought that they have changed in one way or another to adapt to their new environment. Canadian culture and environment encourages and supports openness and

freedom. A female respondent commented that she has adopted the Canadian dress code and really enjoys it a lot. However, a few felt that they have not changed at all.

Discussing ways in which their culture is significantly different from the mainstream culture, some respondents said that the Coptic way is more "old-fashioned." This is reflected in their attitudes toward women's status, children's upbringing, respect for the elderly, pre-marital sex, and other such issues. Some respondents believe that Western/Canadian family ties are weaker than Coptic ones, and they do not like that. They wonder why Canadians over 18 years of age move out of their parents' houses. Copts do not view sex before marriage or homosexuality favourably. Respondents said that LGBTQ is something they cannot understand and consider it a sin within the context of their religion. In general, they

believe their religion to be the defining feature that distinguishes their culture from the mainstream culture.

Despite these cultural differences, Copts are able to strike a happy balance between the two cultures based on respect and tolerance for Canadians, Coptic Canadians, and all other ethnic groups. Most respondents thought that 40-90% of people feel that, overall, they have achieved this balance and are well-adjusted. A few believe that the Coptic group is not receptive to most popular mainstream ideas, and said that the percentage of such well-adjusted people must be much smaller. Nevertheless, at least 25% of the respondents said that they were completely happy about everything in Canada.

This group also thought that it would be fine if Copts became assimilated into the mainstream Canadian society to a point where they forgot their parents' ethnic culture. A person leaving their home country forever should be prepared for this to happen. But most said that they do not want their children to stray from their culture. If that happened, the values and beliefs that they treasure and live by would be forgotten. These values and beliefs play an important role in defining a person's sense of

identity. Traditions and religious beliefs keep people safe and strong. But some argued that if these are starkly different from mainstream traditions and beliefs, they can lead to serious conflicts within the family or individual isolation within the community.

All respondents said they felt respected and accepted in the mainstream culture for their cultural identity. Some said they were admired for their religious piety; others remembered how they shared recipes for traditional food with people from other cultures. They also felt that people respect the way Copts choose to bring up their children or practice their religion.

Strong family values, faith in God, respect for elderly people, the glorious history of ancient Egypt, generosity, and hospitality are some aspects of their culture or community that Coptic Christians feel very proud about and would like to share with their children and others. Some respondents felt that there were no aspects of their culture – beliefs or practices – that they would like to change; they do not deem it necessary to change anything about their culture. However, some others wished that in the future their culture could become more tolerant, more open to new thoughts and ideas.

Social Environments

Copts in Canada are very involved in their ethnic communities. Respondents thought that at least 75% of Copts participate actively in cultural and community events. At church, Copts take on such responsibilities as fundraising, kitchen cleaning, the coordination of social gatherings, etc. They have many close friends from their ethnic community who they meet at church on Sundays, sharing information and giving moral and emotional support to those

going through difficult times. They also have good and close friends from the mainstream communities.

Most Copts participate in political processes like elections. They are interested in politics to various degrees and follow both local and national news. Canadian news is their most popular TV program. They also watch movies, TV series, and sports in English. Elderly people tend to watch more ethnic channels or Arabic

movies. Some respondents said that they do not watch ethnic channels because that does not help them adapt to the new environment.

The majority of respondents thought that they did not experience much discrimination or racism in Canada. One participant said that she had encountered only mild racism a couple of times, but that was mainly due to some “misunderstanding.” Another respondent said that his co-workers made fun of his accent and he felt very uncomfortable with this. Still another shared her experience of how she was treated unfairly at her work and attributed it to racial discrimination.

However, most respondents did not seem to worry too much about racism or discrimination and protection from it. Some said that if these incidents happen to them, they simply

ignore them or joke about them. Some even thought that bad experiences may affect someone for a short time, but eventually good experiences wipe out bad memories. Thus, bad experiences do not have any impact in the long run. Some however thought that discrimination or bullying is a serious matter. Someone who experiences bullying or discrimination because of their racial or religious identity should not take it lightly. Such persons should stand up for themselves, discuss the situation with friends and family and seek their advice, and should not hesitate to file complaints with human rights institutions as required and depending upon the gravity of the incident. However, even if such incidents sometimes occur, they all agreed that they feel safe in their neighbourhood and in Canada.

Family

Most Coptic people lived in extended families in their home countries before coming to Canada. The extended family has many benefits. It often means more help and support, whether moral, social, or financial. Extended family can provide people with a greater sense of security and connection as “there is always someone to lean on in times of need, or to look after them.”

Most respondents came to Canada with their spouses but had no relatives in Canada to support them in their settlement. Some have managed to sponsor relatives, but generally found it difficult to sponsor their grandparents or other immediate family members. However, they are able to go back and visit friends and families in their home countries.

When asked about the traditional family structure in their community, most respondents described it as a male-dominated, patri-

archal structure where the father is the head of the family, followed by the mother and then by the male siblings. Some respondents think that both the father and the mother are the heads of a Coptic family. Men are usually the decision-makers, even though church teaching ordains equality of all. However, a family’s actual power dynamics may be remarkably influenced by the personality of the husband and wife. Some noted that there are certain areas in which women traditionally have more say, but did not specify which areas.

Sibling order also has an important role to play in the family hierarchy. For example, older siblings are expected to help care for the younger ones when needed; they have more responsibilities and consequently, more power over the younger siblings. Boys have more power than girls, while women are taught to play their traditional role as caregivers. One re-

spondent said that her parents raised her to be a good wife which is why she learned so much about cooking. The family hierarchy or power equation may differ between families but regardless, elders are accorded very high respect in all Coptic families.

The parenting style popular among Copts can be described as “a combination of lenient and strict,” or “something in between.” Many respondents thought that parenting styles differ from parent to parent and really depend on how broad-minded the parent is. Among Coptic Canadians, newly-immigrated parents tend to be more “controlling and judgmental.” When that is the case, there is a lot of parent-child conflict in families. Some respondents said that Coptic children in Canada often want all the freedom and none of the responsibilities, but that it is a parent’s duty to enforce rules when necessary because the rules are only for the good of their children. Children may or may not appreciate them, but that does not matter. They will eventually realize their parents’ concern, support, and love once they grow up and have their own children.

In the Coptic community, children are expected to listen to their parents, not to speak to their elders in an angry or disrespectful manner, to behave well in school, and to help

out with household chores. Ignoring or talking back to parents, swearing, and refusing to greet elderly people are deemed disrespectful behaviours. Many adult children live with their parents, but a lot also move out after they get married or enter college. Most parents in this culture want their children to live with them and Coptic children are welcome to stay with their parents for as long as they want. However, many children want freedom and to live their lives in their own way. If that is their choice, they are allowed to do so.

It is common for Coptic couples to sponsor their parents to live with them, whether they are the husband’s parents or the wife’s. (Interestingly, some respondents said it is more common for the wife’s parents to come live with immigrant couples, while others said the opposite.) Elderly parents expect to be taken care of by their adult children. If parents live with adult children, they usually help around with chores, sending children to school or picking them up from there. However, respondents were divided over how acceptable it is among Coptic people to put elderly parents in seniors homes. Some thought it was alright or common. Others thought it was rare and unacceptable, unless an elder requires special attention due to critical health issues.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

In the past, parents believed that it was their responsibility to find a suitable match for their adult children and arrange their marriages. Arranged marriages in Coptic society still take place but they are believed to be much less common in present-day society than earlier. But even if marriages are arranged by the parents, the decisions about partner selection are consensual; the children’s consent is an essential

part of such marriages. In the olden days, dating was forbidden in the Coptic communities. Nowadays, most young people choose their own dates or marriage partners. One of the respondents made an interesting comparison and said that the current dating websites are actually functioning like the old-time match-makers.

When parents arrange their children’s marriage, their purpose is to make sure that the

spouses are compatible, and the marriage is good and will result in a fulfilling and long-lasting relationship. Parents want to choose the “right” person for their child since they are expected to have more experience and wisdom and know what is best for him/her. But a child who doesn’t like the match can decline the proposal.

One of the problems with arranged marriages in Canada is cultural differences between the spouses if the marriage is arranged internationally. The cultural gap between a native-born Coptic Canadian and a new immigrant to Canada could be significant. Women who come to Canada through an arranged marriage often find it easier to leave a husband and live on their own if the marriage does not work out.

Most respondents think that their church exerts a lot of pressure on the community to follow traditions. For example, the church is unyielding about pre-marital sex (which it forbids) or divorce (which must be approved by the church). Therefore, at church and at home young people are continually reminded about these rules against permissive conduct. Many parents establish curfews for their children and diligently keep tabs on them – where they go and what they do – which the children often resent. For Coptic people, weddings are mandated to take place at their church. However, some respondents disagree: they do not believe that there was any significant pressure from the community or the church to adhere to traditions.

Nonetheless, most Copts do not resent the role of their community as a cultural custodian; rather they appreciate the fact that it is helping to preserve traditions. Some respondents feel that only the older generation is interested in preserving traditions – the younger people are either uninterested or resentful. Some others think that these decisions are more a matter

of personal choice. Some would probably prefer more freedom and fewer restrictions, while others might think that it is important to preserve traditions even if that means imposing certain restrictions on people’s choices and behaviours.

As previously mentioned, most young people nowadays date and select their own spouses. Interracial marriages are becoming more and more common and they are even welcomed. Many still prefer to marry someone from the same Coptic Christian culture, and quite often marriages occur between relatives. If parents do not approve their child’s selection of a spouse, they try to talk to their child and discuss these concerns. However, eventually, most parents give in to the child’s decision. Sometimes, children reconsider their choices. In extreme cases, children may end up leaving their parents or the parents disowning children for their disobedience and for not following parental advice.

Marital conflicts in Coptic couples in Canada commonly center upon financial issues, division of everyday responsibilities (who should help children with their homework or who should do the cooking) or differences of opinion over such matters as the “proper” way of parenting. In some cases, conflicts are believed to stem from the “controlling and dominating” behaviour of the husband. Some respondents assume that there are more conflicts in marriages in Canada. This is because new immigrants often feel stressed out by their inferior English skills and the difficulty of finding a good job – in other words, the common stressors of settlement and transitions. Stress can make marriage relationships strained and complicated. But others believe that marriage conflicts are just as much of a reality among Coptic couples living in their home countries as among those living in Canada.

In the Coptic community, people's perception of marriage break-up or divorce is guided by religious teachings. While discussing this, some respondents reiterated the church's stand on divorce: it can only be allowed in cases of adultery. Divorce is discouraged in the Coptic community and often looked down upon. Earlier it used to be almost a so-

cial stigma, but now more and more people are trying to be open and more accepting of such realities as a part of life. Fifty per cent of respondents believe that the wife is considered more responsible for avoiding marital conflicts and is blamed more when marriages break down.

Children and Youth

Like all Canadian parents, Coptic parents worry about their children, especially when they are adolescents, which is a highly impressionable stage of life. They worry about their children getting involved with pre-marital sex, drugs, and drinking problems; they worry about their children falling into the wrong company, exposing them to bad influences. Even with these worries and anxieties about their children, Coptic parents do not want to be too restrictive or unreasonably controlling. Rather, they strive to promote the concept of "responsible independence" in their children, both sons and daughters. Most respondents assumed that parents worry more about their daughters than their sons. Independence is less encouraged in girls than in boys.

Coptic parents are devoted parents and enjoy good relationships with their children. The respondents stated that over 50% of parents feel that they are close and connected to their children. The percentage of children sharing similar feelings may be a little lower. Interestingly, one respondent said that the percentage of children who feel close to their parents is always less than the percentage of parents who feel close to their children. This may be a phenomenon common to all cultures due to such natural factors as age and the generation gap. A few participants disagreed and assert-

ed that, realistically, the percentage could be as low as 20 for both parents and children.

In regard to the reasons for low self-esteem among Coptic youth in Canada, the respondents considered the following factors among the most common: the youth's feeling of inferiority about their culture and country of origin; unattractive appearance; academic frustration; embarrassment about their parents; and feeling torn between mainstream culture and their parents' ethnic culture. Some newly-immigrated teenagers might also feel uncomfortable about their English proficiency and ethnic accent.

Quite a few respondents believe that there are no school drop-outs in their community because Copts put a lot of emphasis on children's education. Another respondent assumed that the drop-out rate would be less than 5%, and that it would be mostly due to family financial needs and not incompetence or irresponsible behaviour on the part of the youth. However, a few thought that whatever the reason behind it, this drop-out rate could be as high as 25% or even 45%.

Mixed classes or school uniforms are not a concern for most Coptic parents, but they may have problem with sex education in schools. Many parents believe that such education is being introduced too early to students in the

Canadian school system. Respondents argued that 20-60% of Coptic parents may oppose sex education at an early age but 100% would not recognize sexual minorities (LGBTQ) as normal or acceptable. Youth identifying as LGBTQ are not too sure about their parents' response; it is possible that they would be forced to marry against their will. So, they would avoid sharing their gender orientation with their family unless absolutely necessary.

Respondents have no doubt that education is considered extremely important in Coptic communities. A good education brings young people a good future, so they will not have to struggle with financial uncertainties as their parents did. A degree in higher education from a prestigious school is a matter of pride and status for Coptic parents. Coptic parents are very involved in their children's schooling, but they just want to give advice and share their experience. They do not want to persuade their children to choose an occupation just because it is secure and prestigious. They want their children to pursue something that is personally meaningful as well.

Status of Women

Respondents do not believe that men and women have equal status either at home or in the job market. Some cited church teachings, that men and women are equal but different. However, others pointed out that gender equality in the Coptic community is more at a theological/theoretical level. It is not a reality. To some extent, boys and girls are treated equally by the parents, because parents love their children equally. They both have the same access to education and good healthcare. But boys have more freedom to go out with their friends and stay out late. Girls are expected to

Respondents perceive that Coptic youth do feel a clash of values when confronted with certain situations, for example: whether to make a sacrifice for other family members or pursue their personal choices; whether to exhibit passive obedience to parents or resort to critical thinking and questioning; whether to defer to elders out of respect or sincerely express personal opinions; and whether to demonstrate emotional self-restraint or freely express their feelings and emotions. At some point, youth get frustrated or upset by such issues; such conflicts are normal and an unavoidable reality. The bright side is that challenges make a person stronger. Later when children grow up, they may start to appreciate better their parents' thoughts and actions. Coptic youth value their cultural heritage. While they would like to reject some parts of their culture, such as arranged marriages, patriarchal family structure, and forced career choices, they would like to keep their native language and their Christian names, as well as traditional values of respect and discipline.

help their mothers with household chores and to be more obedient.

Most respondents believe that in Coptic culture husbands have more power and authority since they are the head of the family and its primary decision-maker. One respondent pointed out that if a man leaves his wife for another woman, it is deemed alright by the community; but if the wife gets romantically involved with another man, the marriage break-up is viewed as totally unacceptable.

About 80% of Coptic women in Canada work but there are differences between the

types of work that women and men do. Men tend to work in more prestigious and professional occupations such as engineering, medicine, and pharmaceuticals. They also work in heavy-duty jobs or on night shifts, while many women work in less lucrative office jobs or social services. A much larger number of women work in teaching, nursing, or healthcare aide positions. More men than women are believed to hold full-time positions. Women do not get the same opportunity as men to upgrade or to have a job that suits their education or skill levels. Many women must sacrifice their careers to take care of family and children.

It has now become more common than it was in the past for women to contribute to the family income. Some women have their own bank accounts, and some have joint ones, or both. Women generally have access to the family income, but many of them do not know very well how the family's money is being spent or invested. It is unlikely that they make financial decisions on their own.

Some women may not have worked in their country of origin. When they come to Canada, they start working due to the family's financial needs or to the availability of the right opportunities. This changes their status in the family or the family hierarchy. It makes women more independent and stronger. The more knowledge and work experience they have outside the home, the more likely they are to get involved in the family's financial decisions. Some respondents also pointed out that if the old perception of the female gender role does not change in response to new and different realities, it often causes tension and strife in the family. One respondent answered that in a truly pious religious family, men and women are always equal whether the wife is working or not.

Most women make their own decision when selecting a partner and cannot be forced to

marry against their wish. A wife living with her in-laws is usually treated with respect and she has basically the same responsibilities as other wives living separately from their in-laws. It is still a common expectation for women to take care of their in-laws because women are considered the primary caregivers to the family. But they are not expected to sacrifice their careers to take care of the family.

Women can and do seek help against abusive husbands, although some may choose to live with the abuse and not do anything about it. Help against abuse usually comes from parents and relatives. It also comes from the priest. All these try to understand the situation and come up with solutions. Sometimes, other community members may also intervene and try to help. Measures may be suggested depending on the extent of the abuse. Sometimes the couple may be asked to live separate and apart for some time. People may try to talk to the abuser and persuade him to stop and behave more sensibly. If the circumstances are extreme, people do not hesitate in calling the police, but this happens only in rare instances. Some respondents also depicted a very dark and dismal picture of the lives of abused women and discussed situations where the community took the abuser's side and even blamed the victim for her own abuse instead of helping her.

Most respondents thought that their community does not expect women to tolerate abuse. Because of the possibility of police involvement, some abusive husbands tend to think twice before resorting to violence. But some respondents also expressed skepticism about the actual result of community intervention. They believe that the more the other people get involved, the more trouble it makes for the victim and for the entire family, which may end up becoming dysfunctional.

A woman's family, including her parents and siblings, usually will support her when she wants to stand up to abuse or when she decides to leave an abusive relationship. Some respondents said that after the divorce, some women can get married again and move on with their lives. But a woman who is considered responsible for her divorce because of her own shortcomings will find it very difficult to get married again. In general, it is not very easy for a divorced woman to remarry. All agreed that nobody likes the idea of a divorce or supports it; divorce is always considered and accepted if it is the only practical solution or the last resort.

Religion

Half the respondents said that most Coptic people would view themselves as very religious; the other half thinks that most people would identify themselves as somewhat religious. The basic tenets of their faith are belief in God, loving their enemy, giving to those in need, living in peace, and being humble. Their common religious practices include going to church every Sunday, practicing confession, receiving communion, giving to the poor, and prayer. Some respondents said that Christian teachings help them be patient and kind to everyone, and always remain positive and hopeful. One respondent said her ultimate achievement in life is to live like Christ.

Some respondents said that they perceive illness as the will of God, and the sick person must learn something from it. They also think that belief in an after-life must strengthen people and comfort them when dealing with the illness. But most do not believe in a connection between illnesses and their religious beliefs. Respondents expressed different opin-

Young women in the Coptic society see a conflict between their traditional roles (caring, nurturing, purity, and self-sacrifice) and modern identity or individual aspirations. They have the freedom to travel, make friends, but some respondents said that they have a problem with very young women dating. Women are expected to avoid any action that may bring about family shame. To be sure, women are judged more strictly than men and they are still expected to do most of the household work. A few respondents mentioned that nowadays men share the household chores and are willing to contribute more than they did in the past.

ions about whether Copts listen to alternative healthcare practitioners or faith-healers. Some believe it is a common practice while others disagreed.

In general, all respondents believe that religion and spirituality contribute to people living a healthier life, because the Christian religion teaches people to be optimistic, to always stay positive and never lose hope, which is a healthy mindset. Some also expressed appreciation of the custom of confession to a priest. This process can give people the same benefits as any psychological counselling, because it makes them feel immensely relieved. The belief in God and the assurance that one can always rely on God makes people feel comforted and happier.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

The respondents said that they would expect a counsellor to help them deal with stress, advise them as to how to adapt, and provide guidance through a crisis, or simply offer some tips on how to feel better. One respondent said she would just want an opportunity to open up to someone about difficult issues. Another respondent said that the effect of psychological counselling usually lasts only for a certain time and is only temporary.

The respondents agreed that a respectful and trusting relationship between a client and counsellor is essential for effective counselling. Some things that counsellors can do to build respectful and trusting relationships with their clients are the following: demonstrate a desire to understand the patient's needs and keep them feeling hopeful; let the client know that they will keep the conversation confidential; exercise due diligence by collecting general knowledge about the client's ethnic culture and background; listen and ask more questions instead of rushing to a conclusion; and follow up with the client.

Conversely, certain things can make it difficult for a client to build respectful or trusting relationship with a counsellor. The counsellor who is insincere, judgmental, too pushy, or unwilling to put much effort into understanding the client and tries to treat him/her like a product on the conveyor belt, clients can neither trust nor respect. No effective counselling can ensue. Also, clients will not seek help from a counsellor who gives them no opportunity to speak and express their feelings in a safe and encouraging environment, and only tries to give advice or point out mistakes.

Cultural rules of behaviour may help a counsellor to establish rapport with a client. But for Coptic people, the most important thing is that the counsellor shows care and friendliness. Eye contact, body language, gestures like showing respect to a lady by opening the door for her can certainly make a client feel comfortable with the counsellor. However, some respondents totally disagree with the previous statement. They said that none of those behaviours really matter in their culture. They would not expect a mental health therapist to observe any specific cultural rules when helping a client from the Coptic community.

The respondents unanimously acknowledged the importance of personal and confidential disclosures for successful counselling. One respondent also suggested that the counsellor use examples from Coptic religious culture to illustrate his/her point while counselling a Coptic client. This would make it easier for the client to open up and share his/her thoughts.

A counsellor who tries to guide people to reveal deep-seated fears and anxieties may discomfort some Coptic clients. Emotional restraint is especially encouraged and common among men. But this may be eased if the counsellor takes a good approach. Good timing is important for the counsellor, who should not be investigative. The counsellors are expected to be patient in their exploration of personal and intimate issues. Clients need time to build the trust to be comfortable in sharing these issues.

Most respondents said they would have no problem discussing such issues as their

childhood, pre-migration challenges, immigration-related issues (i.e., fear of losing immigration status), experiences of racism and discrimination, religion, or any traumatic past experiences. Copts may not feel as comfortable discussing the following: their sex lives; family matters; parents' narrow-mindedness; and financial difficulty at home. The lack of an opportunity to talk about their religion would also trouble them. One respondent said that sex would be the most difficult thing for them to talk about.

Many respondents said that all of the following would make it difficult for them to open up to a counsellor: fear that the counsellor would not understand their cultural values or belief systems; fear that the counsellor may lose respect for them after coming to know their weaknesses; and fear that the counsellor may hold cultural stereotypes against the clients. Others believe that since a counsellor is trained to be non-judgmental, they would have no problem talking about any issue with him/her. Everyone agreed that it is very important for clients not have to worry about being judged after they have disclosed their personal issues. It is also very important for them to feel that the choice or response they made is understood by their counsellor.

Almost all respondents would rather receive "clear advice" from a counsellor than work on their own with the information they receive. Only a few said that they would appreciate a combination of both approaches.

Many counsellors believe in equalizing the power between therapist and the client and not holding a power position in therapy. When asked their opinion about this, almost all respondents said equalizing the power between the therapist and the client would make them feel more comfortable, not less. Nevertheless, a couple of them doubted if they are experienced enough to be "in an equalized power" situation during therapy.

Many counsellors are taught to ask clients with cultures different from their own to "teach" them about their culture and the norms, beliefs, and the worldviews they hold. Almost all respondents thought this would make them feel more comfortable with the counselling process. Sharing their cultural values would make them feel more connected to the counsellor, but also give them a chance to take the leading role in the therapy. It would also reduce the possibility of being misunderstood due to cultural stereotypes or cultural differences.

Indeed, some clients can feel uncomfortable reviewing their past and the negative experiences they have had, especially with a family member. However, according to the respondents, as uncomfortable as these reviews may be, clients from Coptic background would be fine with them so long as they are undertaken by the counsellor in a non-judgmental and respectful manner.

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South Asian Canadians

My Community

South Asia or the Indian subcontinent represents the southern region of the Asian continent, and includes the current territories of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It has a population of about 1.7 billion people, which is over 24% of the world's population. The term "South Asian Canadians" is used to refer to Canadians who either were born in one of the South Asian countries or can trace their ancestry to it. In 2016, the number of South Asian Canadians stood at 1,924,635. This constitutes 5.6% of the Canadian population and 25.1% of the visible minority population, making them the largest visible minority group, followed by Chinese and Black Canadians ("Immigration and ethnocultural diversity," 2017). The largest concentration of South Asian populations in Canada is found in metropolitan Toronto (995,125), followed by Vancouver (287,900), Calgary (122,515), Montreal (90,815), and Edmonton (91,595) ("South Asian Canadians," n.d.). As of 2012, India was the third largest source of immigrants to Canada after the Philippines and China. Pakistan was the fourth, Sri Lanka the seventeenth, Bangladesh the nineteenth, and Nepal the thirty-eighth. South Asians also immigrate to Canada from other countries and regions, such as Fiji, Uganda, Tanzania, Mauritius, the Middle East, and the U.K.

The first migration from any of the South Asian communities can be traced back to 1903 when Sikhs from India were lured to Canada by high wages. Between 1961 and 1971, the South Asian community in Canada grew from

6,774 to 67,925, although many of these immigrants did not come directly from South Asia. At the beginning of the 1980s, South Asians began to arrive in significant numbers. The number of South Asian immigrants arriving annually became 15,000 in 1985 and in 2012 46,000 ("South Asian Canadians," n.d.). The earliest immigrants, the Sikhs, settled in British Columbia initially, but for the past two decades Indians have also immigrated to Ontario (Toronto), Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary), and Quebec (Montreal) due to growing economic opportunities in these regions. Of South Asians, 68% are foreign-born (Lindsay, 2001). According to the 2011 census, Edmonton has about 35.3% visible minority, of which South Asians constitute the largest ethnic group at 57,500 or a total of 7.2% which rose from 5.3% in 2006 (38,225) – a 50% increase ("Demographics of Edmonton," n.d.).

As would be expected from 1.7 billion people living in eight countries, practicing about a dozen religions, and speaking nearly two dozen officially recognized languages, the South Asian population in Canada is very diverse and has several linguistic, regional, and religious subgroups. For example, in Edmonton, we have one or more associations of the following linguistic groups from India alone: Punjabi, Hindi, Bangla, Gujarati, Malayali, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, and others. There are several religious subgroups as well. There are five or more temples for various faiths of Hindus from South Asia. Affinity of language and religion draws together people who thereby may realize the same support as they would from

an extended family, especially when they are new and missing all the more their friends and family back home

South Asians interact with all South Asian subgroups, and while they may prefer someone from their own group for matrimonial alliances for reasons of compatibility, very few would follow such customs strictly. Intergroup marriages are fairly common among South Asians in Canada, although a small percentage may still want to marry only within their faith, linguistic, or regional group.

Immigration to Canada from South Asian countries has been caused mainly by the desire for good education, employment, healthcare, quality of life, and safety. English is the second official language of India and enjoys a similar popularity in most other South Asian countries. This significantly helps emigration and transition to Canada.

South Asia's history reaches back more than 5,000 years and has witnessed some of the most glorious times – “golden ages” of peace, prosperity, and progress – as well as dreadful periods of bloodshed, plunder, and barbaric attacks on its people and civilization. Notwithstanding these events, South Asia's social and cultural fibre remained mostly unchanged, thanks to the resilience instilled by the deep,

underlying spiritualism of its culture. As the renowned Victorian poet, Matthew Arnold, wrote in 1867, “The East bow'd low before the blast/In patient, deep disdain; She let the legions thunder past/And plunged in thought again.”

Respondents expressed pride in their cultural heritage and in the modern status of their country and its recent progress. India is now the second fastest-growing economy in the world. But they also noted their discontent over the undignified behaviour of some of their political leaders, corruption, and some aspects of social insecurity. Internal wars or community conflicts, motivated for small political gains and/or stemming from social inequality and status make South Asian people concerned and unhappy. Half the population trusts people who hold political power while the other half does not. For many, immigration is an escape from this.

As indicated, the South Asian diaspora in Canada is indeed very large. A brief article cannot possibly summarize its culture and do it justice. While the following discussion may broadly apply to all South Asians, it relates particularly to India and Pakistan, the two largest countries of origin of South Asians in Canada.

Immigration and After

Respondents from South Asian communities said that the major reasons for their migration to Canada were economic growth, career opportunities, social security, the competitive environment, high living standards, and generally, a better life and prospects. Many young people come here for higher studies. Children sponsor the immigration of their parents. Due to the transparency of the Canadian immigra-

tion system, most South Asians do not consider the process of immigration to be difficult. However, respondents shared the odd case in which an application for family sponsorship was rejected on uncertain grounds or took much longer than expected.

Respondents thought that for them, the real challenges of immigration started after their arrival in Canada. Most described these chal-

lenges as overwhelming and even heart-breaking. They included loss of family, loss of professional status, difficulties in finding suitable jobs, lack of Canadian job experience, financial struggles, education and language barriers, and cold weather.

A large percentage of South Asian immigrants feel dissatisfied with their career status. The rate of success for South Asians who have studied in Canada is believed to be much higher than that of those who acquired their degrees elsewhere and immigrated to Canada in search of work. According to our respondents, very few immigrants were fortunate enough to get a job in their respective fields within a year or two. Inability to secure a suitable job affects every aspect of their lives – mental health, children's education, finances, and relationships. The frustration makes them irritable and short-tempered. Family members begin to fight over small matters. They also become hopeless and pessimistic. All this often leads to depression, anxiety, and addiction – the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, and other poor coping mechanisms. Respondents also cited some cases of repatriation on account of frustration. Raising children in a new society and culture with conflicting value systems while maintaining religious and cultural values; dealing constantly with the harsh realities of unemployment and financial stress – these are some of the challenges that

make some respondents question their decision to immigrate.

South Asians often are not equipped with the soft skills required for the labour market. Most of them lack Canadian job experience. Employers prefer Canadians and those with Canadian degrees and experience. Immigrants who do not have any of these face extreme challenges in obtaining the right career opportunity, which may never happen. However, respondents still thought that around 50% of South Asians feel that they have meaningful employment. This is either because they have been established here for many years or because their skills were a good match for a particular type of job. A high percentage of immigrants try to diversify their career path in search of more suitable employment opportunities.

Generally, South Asians speak their native language at home and prefer English for professional communication. Most South Asians have a functional knowledge of English. Elders or others who have arrived under family sponsorship may face challenges living in and adjusting to the new culture. They always need a family member to accompany them wherever they need to go, for example, to a doctor's appointment, faith centres, community gatherings, and other such events. Young children may also suffer a language handicap that makes school very difficult for them.

Culture

South Asian culture is family-oriented. For centuries, people have lived in extended families that normally included three and occasionally four generations. A common characteristic of South Asian culture is commitment to family and relationships. South Asians are also

very proud of their culture and values and do not want to see them change substantially, or in response to passing fads.

South Asians try their best to stay connected to their culture by going to their religious places, teaching their children about

their culture, and encouraging them to follow its values and external expressions. The latter include culturally appropriate dress, the celebration of cultural festivals, and adherence to traditions. South Asians also try to travel to their home countries with their children to maintain close connections with their origins. The fact that most of these countries are democracies headed by popularly elected governments makes it safe to make these visits and keep these connections.

When new to Canada, South Asians try all the harder to adhere to their cultural norms and behaviours. As time goes by and they become more comfortable in their new home, many become more accepting of the mainstream as well as the other cultures. They relax some of their norms and practices and adopt some of those followed by others. Such changes often begin with dressing and food. While most already speak a mixture of languages in the family, some may begin to speak more English in personal interactions. As they feel more a part of the new environment, they start taking more interest in Canadian news, politics, TV shows, movies, other entertainment, and sports. South Asian teens and young people are more interested in watching Western movies and listening to western music.

Dating was not very common in South Asian countries in the past, when matches were arranged by parents or elders. This situation has changed significantly in the last ten years. Many South Asian parents living in Canada may be agreeable to their adult children dating and finding their own life-partners, all the while wishing that the child finds alliance within their faith, linguistic, or regional subgroup. Families from a Muslim background are generally reluctant to accept this concept. But in this very large community, the number of interracial couples is increasing steadily.

Many people in India and other South Asian countries are strict vegetarians. Some remain so, while some others may start eating non-vegetarian food to adapt to the new lifestyle and cold weather. Some become more adventurous and travel a lot more in Canada.

Many South Asians would strongly disagree about how much freedom or autonomy children should have in Canada. They do not like the idea of children moving out of the family home when they are 18. They are unable to see why this necessitates teaching them life skills at such a tender age. South Asian cultures value austerity and self-discipline. They discourage their children from excessive and late-night partying or drinking. Some South Asian subgroups do not eat meat or consume alcohol. Many believe in dressing modestly for religious or other reasons. Most South Asian parents want their children to respect and follow their religious values and practices. When children try to act differently, clashes, unpleasantness, and strained relationships often arise in the home. In most cases, parents and children manage to negotiate a compromise, although resentment may persist. Severe clashes, where no one is willing to accommodate the other, lead to people distancing themselves from one another, emotionally and physically.

The goal of South Asian parenting is to enable children to pick the best from both cultures and be well-adjusted. That being said, a certain degree of appreciation is associated with maintaining cultural traditions and values, and considerable disapprobation with abandoning them. Children who stray from their culture are conceived to be in grave danger. It is feared that they will become addicts or alcoholics, or sexually promiscuous; they will give up their studies, have no steady job, and display an uncaring and disrespectful manner toward parents and other elders. (It is worth

noting that these nightmares are common to parents in all circumstances.)

In short, South Asian parents think that children who stray from their culture may themselves become lost and experience a serious identity crisis. Whenever people leave their own culture and adopt another culture, they undergo a tremendous amount of self-questioning and doubt. South Asian parents believe that close family ties, caring for each other, commitment to relationship, clean living, and a sincere faith in religion or God – that all these aspects of culture will keep children safe in trying times. How people behave depends primarily on who they think they are.

Respondents believe that one area where South Asian and Western cultures differ fundamentally is in regard to individualism. For centuries, South Asians have lived in joint or extended families. In such situations, wealth, income, and assets are equally shared or used by all family members. For example, if one sibling makes more and the other less, they still maintain the same living standards, even though one would contribute more to the joint expenses and the other less.

Nevertheless, all South Asian respondents from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh said that they feel well-adjusted, safe, and comfortable in Canada. The freedom to follow either culture as and when desirable creates a feeling or perception of cultural harmony. They also consider the trade-offs and feel content with their decision to immigrate: they can follow their culture and religion; they live in peace and safety; their children have access to the best education in the world; and the entire family has a secure financial future.

Few respondents reported feeling unwelcome in Canada. This is due in part to their growing population, so they have a noticeable presence in all walks of life – doctor's offices,

hospitals, schools, university, businesses, sales, and public transport. The participants are especially appreciative of the government's attitude and efforts to make their community feel welcome, to acknowledge their presence and contribution, something demonstrated by their representation in federal and local governments. Participants mentioned how their food, Yoga, music, and especially Bollywood movies are increasingly popular in Canada and gradually becoming mainstream. They noted with great joy how Canadians often accord them such popular South Asian greetings as *Namaste* or *Assalamualaikum*. During their major festivals, national leaders relay holiday greetings through the national news, newspapers, and bulletin boards in the public library and other community centres. Many employers offer leaves of absence to celebrate these festivals. To a South Asian, all this signifies acceptance. No respondent reported having been disrespected by a Canadian for following a cultural norm.

The respondents agreed that the South Asians are proud of their cultural values. These include strong family bonds; respect for elders; making sacrifices for other family members; emphasis on educational excellence; history and literature; ideals of simple and austere living and the inherent spiritualism of their culture and its highly developed spiritual philosophy. These are values that they want to pass on to their children and that they try their best to practice so that they can be role models to their children.

South Asian parents proudly celebrate their cultural heritage in Canada. At present, there are over 20 faith centres meeting the spiritual needs of South Asian subgroups in Edmonton, including temples, mosques, and *gurdwaras*. South Asians also celebrate all their major festivals in Edmonton. One respondent

said that he was thrilled to celebrate *Holi* (a Hindu festival) at City Hall.

Nonetheless, there are certain things about their culture that South Asians do not like. One of them is the deeply entrenched patriarchy which gives rise to male dominance and the inequality of women. Women are still assigned a much greater share of such (largely invisible) household chores as housekeeping and caregiving for every member of the family. Young South Asians especially resent such gender differentials.

Some respondents believe that people's censorious attitude toward young women's dress and makeup is only a facet of the community's general patriarchal attitude. Some maintain that women own as much responsibility for patriarchy as men do. Young female participants mentioned the "colourism" prevalent in this community, which holds light-skinned women to be much more desirable than women with darker skin tones. As it is, many South Asian women experience low self-esteem because they are unable to conform to Western standards of beauty, especially in their adolescence and teenage years.

Young people also do not like their parents'

insularity, and want them to be more open and inclusive of other communities and cultures. Some think their parents are too ambitious when it comes to their children's careers, especially the extreme preference for careers in medicine, engineering, and the law (although they acknowledge that parents only do this to secure their children's futures). They also recognize what endless sacrifices their parents make to help children achieve their career goals or do well in any respect.

However, respondents argued that South Asian countries have changed a lot in the past decade too. As a result, South Asian immigrants today do not feel the culture shock upon arriving in Canada as they did 20 years ago. A few said that, while countries like India have changed, the memories of immigrants have fossilized. For example, ten years ago the majority of marriages in India took place by arrangement. Now, live-in relationships have become very common and gained an increasing degree of social sanction as well as legal protection. Yet many parents in Canada who came from India want their children to form alliances with a proper wedding endorsed by the traditions of their culture and religion.

Social Environments

Many of the linguistic and religious subgroups among South Asians are quite different from each other. The largest linguistic subgroup in Canada from India is that of Punjabi-speaking people. People from North India living in Edmonton speak Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and other languages. People from Pakistan speak Punjabi and Urdu. People from Sri Lanka speak Sinhalese and Tamil. People from Bangladesh speak Bengali, and those from Nepal, Nepali.

Generally speaking, South Asians are strongly connected to their community. In Edmonton, most South-Asian subgroups have their own associations. Each offers a forum to interact with other community members and support one another's settlement in Canada. They gather for sports, cultural festivals, Bollywood movie shows, etc. They also have region-based Facebook pages like "Indians in Edmonton," "Indians in Toronto," and "Indians in Halifax." Members use these social

media platforms to post their concerns or share suggestions. Many South Asians visit their faith centres regularly and also work as volunteers. They come together to celebrate major religious festivals like *Baishakhi*, *Eid*, *Diwali*, *Janmashtami*, or *Katha* of Ramayana and Mahabharata. It is common for South Asians to attend the weddings, birthdays, or marriage anniversaries of their friends.

Most South Asians have close friends with whom they meet regularly or stay in touch through Facebook and Whatsapp. They usually support each other in their social needs, but out of rivalry and arrogance, some turn their backs on people who need help. South Asians also make good friends from the mainstream communities. South Asians who have lived in Canada longer are active in politics, government, and elections. At present, many South Asians are active members of democratically-chosen governments at provincial and federal levels.

Generally, South Asian community members also watch Canadian news, sports channels, English movies, etc. Youngsters tend to prefer watching sports and English movies while elders prefer ethnic channels. All age groups subscribe to ethnic channels, however, so they get latest updates from the home country.

Some respondents shared experiences of discrimination, especially in the recent past. One said that a woman suffered discrimination from a co-worker because of her outfit.

For a week, she tried to deal with it, hoping to get past it with time. Finally, she decided to talk to this co-worker to help her understand the faith-based practices of her religion. All agreed that the racial incidents they faced were subtle rather than blatant, leaving them very uncertain as to whether the discrimination was deliberate or just random. Some even thought that due to their colonial past, South Asians may feel more rejected when they experience racial discrimination.

No one reported facing an incident so hurtful as to require the intervention of a human rights institution. Interestingly, they also discussed discrimination that they encountered from ethnic communities, their own and others. The respondents said that efforts should be made to increase interracial harmony. But all respondents said that they feel accepted in Canada and think that Canadians appreciate the positive features of their culture and values. They feel both welcome and safe in their neighbourhood and Canada. They believe themselves to be very friendly and co-operative with their neighbours and friends. They also feel grateful for the opportunity to be in Canada. One interesting observation was that South Asians, in general, are a patriotic people. A popular South Asian saying holds the motherland higher than heavens. Participants said that most South Asians feel that now that they call Canada home, they must loyally serve this country as they would their motherland.

Family

In the last 30-40 years, extended-family households have been gradually disappearing from the urban centres of South Asia, while remaining very common in the rural areas. Ex-

tended families served many purposes. Every member had a place and role. Older parents were well served by their children and did not need seniors homes. They helped raise their

grandchildren, who seldom needed to go to a daycare. In fact, they filled a critical gap in parenting. Aunts and uncles played the role of mentors and children learnt warmth, empathy, and tolerance toward each other. They also learnt how to make personal sacrifices for others. Joint families also worked as financial institutions where people could borrow from each other if they needed money. Overall, joint or extended families gave all their members a feeling of protection and enhanced well-being, sharing with each other their sorrows and happiness.

Most South Asians really grieve the loss of this family connection. They miss their parents, especially grandparents, and feel concerned for their health and well-being. Sometimes, immigrants cannot afford the long journey to visit sick parents. Many South Asians have one or more relatives living in Canada who support them in their initial settlement. South Asians visit their home countries regularly and invite their parents and siblings to come to Canada on visitor or immigrant visas.

Traditionally, South Asian families have been male-dominated, headed by a patriarch who could be a father or grandfather. In most families, men make most of the financial and other important decisions, while the wife and mother-in-law look after the household. The grandmother also plays the role of the family's chief counsellor. This patriarchal family structure is changing nowadays, giving way to more democratic families where all family members have equal rights and involve themselves in the decision-making processes. However, in rural areas and in traditional families, patriarchal leanings remain strong.

The eldest son in South Asian families is given the most responsibility to manage household chores and take care of the other siblings. If the father retires or is unable to earn or to

earn enough, the eldest son (traditionally regarded as the family's next breadwinner) is expected to share financial responsibilities with him. If the father dies, the eldest son is expected to take care of all his father's financial and other family obligations. In most cases, other siblings do it together.

Parenting styles have not been very lenient in South Asian cultures. But nowadays, children demand more luxury and freedom. This leads to parent-child conflict in many South Asian families, which believe their cultural ideals support austerity rather than indulgence. Children find parents too controlling, and parents find children irresponsible in their life-choices. Daycares have not been very common in South Asian countries –this was a responsibility shouldered by the grandparents or other relations of working parents. South Asian parents who use a daycare often feel guilty about it, and try to over-compensate by showering their children with expensive gifts and other luxuries.

In South Asian cultures, children are taught from the very beginning to obey their parents and believe everything their parents say. Answering back to parents, speaking with a louder voice than a parent, staring back at them in anger – all these are considered signs of disrespect. Among South Asian families living in Canada, children may resent parents who disapprove of their choices of mate, job, foreign travel, friends, or lifestyle. Parents feel concerned about their children and often find their attitudes very disheartening. Sometimes, this cultural gap becomes so huge that second and third generation South Asians feel like they do not belong in their countries of origin. Yet they do not feel completely integrated into Canada, either. Although they are expected to be more acclimatized to Canadian culture, in fact they may be more severely impacted by an

identity crisis. This causes a lot of turmoil and psychological conflicts in their lives.

Another immigration challenge for South Asians is the guilt they feel for leaving their parents alone in old age – just when they were expected to be with them and serve them. Most try to bring their parents to Canada sooner or later. It is more common for the husband's parents to get sponsored to live with the couple. In the past, the families in South Asian countries used to have many children. In the

past 30-40 years this has changed in urban areas, where most couples want to have one or two children. When the children of such small families emigrate to Canada, no one is left to take care of their elderly parents. Many seniors currently in old-age homes are there because their children emigrated to a Western country. Nevertheless, it is still not considered respectful, and parents who live in these facilities feel unwanted, lonely, and sad.

Marriages and Marital Relationships

Arranged marriage is an age-old custom in South Asian communities. It is sanctioned by their religions and protected by their laws. Generally, parents and elders of the family try to find a suitable match for their marriageable children with the help of other relatives and friends. The arranged marriage is more like two families coming together in an alliance than just the two spouses. In the West, where this is not common, people often wonder how a person can marry a stranger. However, the reality is that arranged marriages are quite successful. The main reason for this is that parents make every possible effort to ensure the compatibility of the prospective spouses. Marriage breakdown is considered a stigma for the entire family which is also the reason why families try to mediate conflicts between the spouses. Sometimes, parental interference may also affect the relationship negatively or lead to control or abuse of the wife by her in-laws.

In the West, arranged marriages may sometimes be mistaken for forced marriages. As a matter of fact, forcing someone to marry against their wishes can make a marriage legally void or voidable. However, parents may sometimes arrange marriages without the con-

sent of the children involved. They usually do this in the belief that they know what is in their children's best interest, but at times such decisions may be taken for other reasons. The parents of a man may pressure him to marry a woman because her father is rich and can provide a large dowry. Sometimes parents and children may simply differ in their preferences: the parents like someone more traditional and the children prefer someone more modern. Parents also may disapprove if their children choose a spouse from a different caste or socio-economic group. Such situations may result in estrangement between children and parents. In most situations the issues are resolved with the passage of time. An extreme outcome of such conflict is honour killing, a heinous crime to which both women and men can fall victim.

In general, arranged marriages are consensual. The spouses and their families willingly agree, and both families welcome the new members enthusiastically. In some cases, most commonly in rural areas, authoritative parents may not consider it necessary to ask for the consent of a spouse (especially the female spouse).

The perception of marriage is gradually changing in South Asian societies. Parents once viewed it as their legal, moral, and religious obligation to find suitable matches for their children. Nowadays, younger people like to date and find their own mates. The acceptance of self-arranged or love marriages (often inter-caste) is steadily increasing. The respondents also ventured that the measures of compatibility are changing. In the past, the caste, faith, or socio-economic status of the spouses were the determinants of compatibility. Now educational credentials or occupational suitability have taken precedence in some South Asian communities.

Parents generally want their children to marry within their own community and follow their traditions. They counsel their adult children on what to look for in a spouse in order to have a healthy and stable relationship. People also take into consideration how well the match will adapt to their family. For this reason, some parents are less than flexible about inter-caste or inter-faith marriages. South Asian parents are likely to fear that the prospective spouse will not understand the family's traditions, which would lead to conflict. One respondent said that Indian parents prefer the partner to be from the same caste and community, or at least an Indian. One participant noted with some frustration that no matter "however educated, rich or sophisticated a girl is, she has to pick a husband from her own clan, even if he is less educated and from lower lifestyle." There are cases of parents withholding their consent when their children have chosen interracial partners. When children suspect that parents may not approve their selection, they sometimes marry secretly and then inform their parents.

Arranged marriages are not an easy custom to follow in Canada. If South Asian parents

look for spouses for their children in the home country, other problems may arise. There may be a significant cultural gap to bridge when one of the intended spouses grew up in Canada and the other in a South Asian country. Western and Eastern cultures differ in several fundamental respects. While Western cultures are mainly individualistic, South Asian cultures are mainly collectivist, putting more emphasis on the community. Food habits, dress, social interaction, family obligations – all these may be viewed differently by spouses brought up in different environments. By and large, they learn from each other and adjust, but sometimes, the differences or lack of understanding may lead to marital conflicts or even to break-up.

In South Asian communities, religious places like temples, mosques, and gurudwaras perform a very important role in bringing people together. Sri Lankan respondents said that they pay visits to religious places for additional non-religious reasons, one being social networking to identify a suitable match for their children. Faith centres may also offer marriage celebrations and couple counselling. Many South Asians appreciate their role as cultural custodians, but some, especially young people, resent the restrictions imposed in the name of maintaining heritage, which often prevent them from adapting and changing over time. Some respondents thought that community pressure in Canada is not so strong as to make people follow traditions.

Marriage conflict in South Asian couples originates in such common issues as disparity in incomes, the division of responsibilities around childraising or household chores, parenting styles, unhealthy interspousal rivalry or control issues, and disputes over financial contributions. Managing the care of parents living with the couple can also cause tension. Oth-

er issues may arise from the money that one spouse (the husband in most cases) sends back home to support his family. In South Asian families, a wife's in-laws sometimes negatively influence family dynamics by mistreating her and inciting the husband to do likewise. Still, in-laws and elders may also intervene to mediate interspousal conflict, an important support unavailable to many South Asian couples living in Canada. In arranged marriages, there is always the chance that the couples do not get along due to differences of interests, ambitions, and the ways in which they were brought up. Beginning a life with another person can be an immense adjustment, especially in arranged marriages when the couple does not know each other well.

On the basis of their experience, some respondents maintained that marriage conflict increases among South Asians when they come to Canada. This could be due to any of a number of stressors: immigration; financial insecurity; unemployment or underemployment; racism and discrimination; language barriers and resultant isolation; the loss of family and friends; low self-esteem and feelings of failure and worthlessness; and health issues, such as depression and anxiety due to daily struggles. In many families, young children rebel against their parents' traditions, beliefs, and heritage, which may cause huge turmoil. Husbands may abuse their wives by confiscating money, preventing them from learning English, or physical violence. The woman may want to work while the man or his family may want her to stay home and perform traditional family roles. Often times, women remain quiet for fear of bringing shame on their families and communities.

But other respondents felt that most South Asian couples live a life of contentment in Canada. Even if the path to transition is rocky and

full of ups and downs, they see that in the end, the benefits outweigh the losses. Many women experience greater contentment because they enjoy much more freedom and safety in Canada than they did in the home country. This group felt that South Asian couples living in Canada are generally healthier and happier than their counterparts back home.

Until recently, divorces or break-ups used to carry a stigma in most South Asian countries. But in recent times people's attitudes are changing. One reason for this may be the growing economic empowerment of women. Although divorce is still considered tragic and shocking, many men and women are able to rebuild their lives afterwards, live fulfilling lives, and marry again.

Traditionally, married women were expected to tolerate abuse, sacrificing themselves silently for the sake of the family and marriage. Nowadays they still are encouraged to "stoop to conquer," but they are not automatically blamed for break-ups or divorces. Nevertheless, the South Asian wife is commonly expected to play the part of the wiser spouse, and therefore is held responsible for avoiding marital conflict.

Spousal abuse is just as common in South Asian cultures as it is in other cultures worldwide. Those who fulfill their wifely and motherly duties in spite of the abuse are often glorified as role models. Nevertheless, women are not expected to keep quiet and tolerate abuse as in the past. Most South Asian countries have highly evolved judicial systems and laws to which women now have recourse when trying to end an abusive relationship. Their efforts are supported and helped by their family (although in rare cases, parents may disapprove). Laws to prevent violence against women are extremely strict. For example, in India, if a woman commits suicide within seven years

of her marriage, and previously was subjected to cruelty by her husband or his relatives, the court may presume (after considering all the circumstances in the case) that he or they abetted her suicide (“Section 113A,” 2016). This law, which is unique in its presumptive approach, came into effect to prevent extensive abuse and torture of women for purposes of extorting dowry from their parents.

Dowry, in the context of South Asian marriages, signifies money or other assets that

parents of a woman promise to give to the bridegroom or his family as part and a condition of the marriage. It is expected to be a gift to the bride from her family but gradually became an instrument to extort money from the bride’s family. Demanding or taking dowry is a crime, punishable by several years of imprisonment for the bridegroom and his family if they are found guilty of executing, abetting, or aiding in it.

Children and Youth

South Asian parents mainly worry about their children’s education, and how it can help them get good jobs. Like all Canadian parents, South Asian parents also worry about the risks that drugs, bullying, gangs, street violence, and peer pressure pose to youth and adolescents. Most South Asian parents do not wish to restrict their children’s activities, but may come across as controlling parents on account of their fear for their children’s safety. But they trust their children and teach them the skills they need to understand the world and make life’s decisions. South Asian parents may appear to grant less freedom to their daughters than to their sons. This is in part because women are less safe in their countries of origin and subject to misdemeanours, crimes, and violence which specifically target women.

Old ways of thinking in these regards were characterized very much by victim blaming. Thus, if a girl was sexually assaulted, insensitive comments would often be hurled at her or at her parents. Why did she go to that place at such and such time? Why was she alone? Why did she wear that kind of dress? Why did her parents do or not do a certain thing? Such episodes would also bring shame on the family,

shame for which the girl or her parents would be held responsible, not to mention the negative effect it would have on her career or matrimonial prospects.

Thus, even though Canada is a relatively safe country, parents still are very careful about their daughters. Canada is also a more permissive society, which often confuses both the parents and youth. Each look at the same question – how much freedom is enough freedom? – from a different angle. A tug-of-war between parents and children sometimes results.

However, this is only one side of the picture. In general, South Asian families are close-knit, tied together by strong bonds of affection, dutifulness, and an ability to make sacrifices for each other. For this family-centricity, they are often described as a “model minority” in Canada. Most youth, as they mature, can appreciate the sacrifices their parents made for the good life they enjoy. Most respondents said that about 85% of people known to them feel very close to their children and are strongly connected to them. It is common for young adults in this community to live with their parents. Most South Asian parents like it. Generally, they move out when they get married, but

they may also move out if they prefer to live independently because of limited accommodation at their parents' house and differences in lifestyles.

It is true that in most families parents and children may clash over parenting styles and other issues due to the cultural and generational gap. Yet most South Asian youth make sincere efforts to live up to their parents' expectations. In some cases, these expectations may be too high or unreasonable, especially when it comes to academic excellence or career choices (a phenomenon now recognized as an instance of child abuse). In many cases, this may be the result of a lack of communication between parent and children. The popular Bollywood movie, *The Three Idiots*, depicts this beautifully.

Adolescent South Asian Canadians experience difficulties in the acculturation process because they often feel caught between their family's culture and the dominant values of the host culture. In these situations, there is often little room for compromise. Consequently, a "generation gap" emerges between parents who were socialized in a traditional setting and their children who are constantly being exposed to new ideas and values in the host culture. Research has shown that Asian Indian adolescents who were born in the North America report lower self-esteem, more anxiety, and heightened family conflict when an acculturation gap exists between themselves and their immigrant parents.

Many South Asian youth, especially girls, suffer from low self-esteem due to their inability to conform to Western standards of beauty. Parents may take on the extra burden of purchasing expensive branded clothing for their children because of the peer pressure they experience. Some children may feel ashamed of their culture and their origin in a Third World

country. As much as they love their parents, at their tender age, they are unable to feel comfortable with their parents' ethnic identity, their way of dressing, their language, manners, or behaviours. Many do not want to eat their ethnic food outside their home because of how it smells. Maintaining self-identity in two cultures is challenging for anybody. Young children may be bullied at school for their differences. They may not talk to their parents about it and try to deal with these issues themselves. Their low self-esteem and inability to share these experiences or find help often induces such mental health issues as anxiety and depression.

Some newcomer parents work more than one job and are extremely busy in order to meet the family's financial needs. For reasons beyond their control, they may be unavailable when children need their help and support. Some do not even understand what discrimination or bullying is, or how to help or protect their child against it. All this can take a toll on children's mental health, educational performance, and emotional and social well-being.

Although there are no statistics to support their views, all respondents believe that the school drop-out rate among South Asian youth is very low, less than 5% or so. For most South Asian parents, the main goal of their lives is their children's education. To a South Asian parent, education is the golden key to their children's bright future – great job opportunities, good income, social status, assurance of finding a good life-partner, and an overall stability and security. Therefore, South Asian parents will happily make any and all sacrifices to support their children's acquisition of academic excellence. Even if they must take jobs well below their educational levels, or work two jobs, they try to ensure that their children spend their time on education and other

personal growth opportunities. South Asian parents continue to encourage their children to choose high-ranking jobs that will enhance their social and economic status.

When South Asian children do drop out of school the main reason is substance abuse or negative peer pressure. Teenage pregnancies are an unlikely reason; they are not very common among South Asian youth due to parental influence. However, in families whose financial needs cannot be met by the parents, children may be seen working part-time or full-time. In rare cases, children may drop their schooling to make money.

It is not very common for South Asian youth to share their sexual issues with their parents. Discussion of sexual matters is still considered a social taboo. An LGBTQ orientation is not regarded as normal, and children find it difficult to disclose to their parents, who would either not believe it or be heartbroken by it. For this reason some children even agree to an arranged marriage, although such marriages are bound to end in shame and much grief on both sides. However, such attitudes

are gradually changing. Particularly enlightened parents understand that this is a natural phenomenon. To deny it may lead their children to isolate themselves and abandon their families in search of their own space. Such rejection can make children vulnerable to mental health issues as well as the dangers of the streets.

South Asian parents do not have problems with mixed classes in school. Although some conservative families may not like to talk with their children about sex, they might permit a mature person to teach their children about it. Some parents are not comfortable with sex education especially for their daughters.

South Asian youth are proud of their cultural heritage and values, family system, and rich traditions as demonstrated in their distinctive and sophisticated culinary art. However, some customs that South Asian youth do not appreciate are arranged marriage, the unequal power dynamic between men and women, treating daughters as “responsibilities,” and unquestioning belief in irrelevant social or religious customs.

Status of Women

There is no greater paradox in South Asian culture than the one that surrounds the status of women. Theoretically, women are accorded a very high place in this society, even higher than that of men, according to the scriptures. But in practice, women are easy targets for what may reasonably be called “hate crimes” – outgrowths of the general contempt in which women are held.

The major religions practiced in South Asian countries give to women a place unparalleled in history. Hinduism says that the mother and motherland are higher than heaven and that all

gods come to live in the house where women are worshipped. Islam says that heaven lies under the feet of the mother. If a husband treated his wife as the religion mandates, it is said, she would live the life of a queen. Sikhism says that without women there would be no world at all. Despite this scriptural reverence, as well as highly evolved legal and judicial systems, women remain unsafe in their homes and streets. They are the victims of such heinous crimes as acid attacks, sex-selective foeticides, honour killings, rapes, and dowry extortion and torture.

Exemplifying further the paradoxical approach to women's status in the society, there are many families in which women enjoy equality with men and the same respect, but in most families, men enjoy more power and autonomy than women. Even women who are working and contributing to the family finances are apportioned more responsibility than men in raising children and in traditionally invisible household chores, such as cooking, laundry, caregiving, and serving elders. Likewise, women are held more responsible than men if their children do not meet educational or social expectations. One respondent said that son-preference and male privilege is an old cultural norm in South Asian countries.

In educated families, parents treat their sons and daughters equally. They make available to them similar educational opportunities and do not discriminate when investing money in their children. However, many parents may encourage their daughters to make career choices that are more compatible with their caregiving role. Parents may be more tolerant when boys explore modern lifestyles, careers, or hobbies, than when girls do. Girls often resent differential treatment at the hands of their parents, especially when it comes to staying out late or going to places like bars. They also resent the imposition of traditional expectations in ways that restrict their career ambitions and when they are judged more strictly than young men. Parents also want their daughters to dress modestly and expect them to help more with chores.

When families immigrate in Canada, it becomes important for women to join the workforce whether or not they have worked in their home countries. Families not only worry about making ends meet but also face financial uncertainties. Respondents believe that at least 70% of women from the South Asian

community work in Canada, but their areas of work differ from those of men. Over-qualified and under-employed is the reality of the life of many immigrant women, including those from South Asia. After immigration to Canada, men may prepare for a professional career by first studying to pass accreditation or licensing exams. Women are less selective about their careers, and as a result find work earlier, taking the first opportunity that comes their way to earn an income and support the family. Immigrant women are over-represented in retail, hospitality, or daycare jobs and work at low wages, sometimes part-time and without any benefits or chances of promotion. A few South Asian women can be seen in the fields of nursing, accounting, administration, and human resources, and fewer still get employment as doctors, professors, engineers, lawyers, and the like. A much higher percentage of these prestigious positions are occupied by men.

Women's financial rights also differ from family to family. In many families, especially those in which both spouses are educated, financial decisions are based on mutual consent. Women may have joint accounts with their spouse as well as personal accounts and other investments and assets. *Stree-Dhan*, meaning wealth and other assets owned by women, is an interesting concept that has prevailed in India. It includes all the gifts and money given to a woman by her family or by her husband's family at the time of her marriage. It is her exclusive property; even her spouse is not allowed to use it without her consent. By extension, if she is working, her salary is regarded as part of her *Stree-dhan*, that she is free to dispense as she wishes. In South Asian countries like India, women have an equal right to inherit family property or assets along with their brothers.

And yet, paradoxically again, there are families in which women do not have a right to their own income and cannot spend their money without their spouse's consent. In some cases, particularly if they do not earn, they may not have a bank account or access to the family finances.

After immigration to Canada, as aforementioned, women often find work earlier than men. This economic empowerment may give them more say in financial and other matters in the family. If men are unable to find suitable employment, a role reversal may occur that can cause tension and conflict in some immigrant families. Although extended families are disappearing at a fast pace, it is not uncommon to still find wives sacrificing their careers in order to meet their caregiving obligations to their families.

Legally, women have the right to marry someone of their own choice. But often this does not translate into practice. In many cases, women are unable to exercise their choices due to such factors as their faith, caste, parents' wishes, family honour, traditions, or other socio-economic issues. A few respondents said that custom dictates that they should marry someone of their parents' choice.

It is a bitter fact that South Asian women have been long expected to suffer with abuse and violence. Now, thanks to awareness campaigns through electronic and social media, the trend is changing, and women are getting empowered to exercise their rights. Women still get blamed and criticized if they seek help from other sources. However, positive changes are gradually taking place.

In addition, because immigrants are selected through a point system, they tend to have better education. South Asian women living in Canada may be more aware of their equality of rights and less afraid of societal pressures.

They tend to refuse to put up with serious abuse at the hands of their husbands. Friends and family are the first and primary sources of help in such situations. However, they also do not hesitate to accept the help of the police or the court. Traditionally, communities have played an important role in mediating spousal conflicts, but that role is diminishing rapidly. On the contrary, many women in abusive situation may shun the community for fear of victim blaming.

It has been found that community members often place undue pressure on women to make compromises that are not in their best interest. In legal disputes involving family law matters, respondents shared a few incidents where lawyers of South Asian origin used social pressure to get women to agree to terms against their best interest. Whether educated or uneducated, South Asian women tend to tolerate abuse until it has reached serious proportions. One reason for this is that divorce is still stigmatized, even though it is allowed by South Asian religions and law in certain conditions. Even single parenthood bears a social stigma.

In the cases of divorce, the wife's parents usually take an active role in supporting their daughter and the children from her broken marriage. In rare cases, open-minded in-laws may also support them. But generally, in-laws choose to terminate their relationship with the former daughter-in-law.

Sadly, there is very low acceptance of divorces or divorced women in India. The status of a divorced woman is not equal to that of a married woman. Thus, the life of a divorced woman can often be full of challenges. In Canada, such women choose to shun their community and avoid community events or gatherings. It is far more difficult for a divorced woman to re-marry than it is for a divorced man, especially if the man is

moneyed and has a Canadian passport. Both these factors – financial prosperity and Canadian citizenship – may weigh heavily in favour of divorced women too. But if the marriage is being arranged internationally, these fac-

tors can also attract men who simply want to use marriage as a passport to Canada. Such marriage arrangements may lead to deceit, exploitation, and abuse.

Religion

Canadians from South Asia tend to be significantly more religious than Canadians as a whole, with only 4% claiming to have no religion compared to 17% of Canadians in 2001. At that time, 28% of Canadians from South Asia were Sikh, 28% Hindu, 22% Muslim, and 16% Christian (“South Asian Canadians,” n.d.). South Asian countries are homes to all major and several other religions of the world.

India, the largest country in the Indian subcontinent, is a secular country by its constitution. Its citizens are about 80% Hindu, 14% Muslim, 2.3% Christian, 1.7% Sikh, and 2% Buddhist, Jain, and others. In Pakistan, 95% of the people are Muslims. The remaining 5% includes Hindus, Christians, and others. In Bangladesh, 90% people are Muslims, 9.5% are Hindus, and 5% includes Christians, Buddhists, and others. In Nepal, 80% of the people follow Hinduism, 9% Buddhism, 4.4% Islam, and the rest Christianity and other religions. Sri Lanka’s population is 70% Buddhist, 12.5% Hindu, 9.5% Muslim, and 7% Christian. In Afghanistan, 99.7% of people follow Islam and the rest Sikhism or Hinduism. Thus, the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and Christians are concentrated in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, while the Muslims are concentrated in Afghanistan (99%), Bangladesh (90%), Pakistan (96%), and the Maldives (100%) (“South Asia,” n.d.).

Thus, immigrants from South Asian countries may follow any of these religions. In

2010, South Asia had the world’s largest population of Hindus at about 1 billion, 510 million Muslims, 35 million Christians and 25 million Buddhists, 20.8 million Sikhs, and 4-5 million Jains (“South Asia,” n.d.). The respondents believed that most South Asians would identify themselves as very religious or quite religious. Members of the younger generation may not be as religious or may follow external or specific practices of their religion while nonetheless identifying themselves as associated with their faith. South Asians believe that their religious tenets strongly inform their everyday life. The ultimate goal for South Asians may be to reach heaven or connect with their divine creator, depending on the faith they follow. For example, Nirvana is the goal of Buddhism, signifying redemption from the cycle of life and death or reincarnation. However, virtuous living and meeting familial, social, and religious obligations is for most people the goal of life.

Hindus make up about 68% of South Asian populations. Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world and is a synthesis of various Indian cultures and traditions with diverse roots and no founder. Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs are the four goals of life: *Dharma* (ethics/duties), *Artha* (prosperity/work), *Kama* (desires/passions), and *Moksha* (liberation/freedom/salvation). Hindus are expected to live a life that is a harmony of all four (“Hinduism,” n.d.).

Belief in *Karma* (action, intent, and consequences), *Samsara* (cycle of rebirth), and the various *Yogas*, paths or practices to attain Moksha are some important tenets of this faith. Hindu practices include rituals such as *puja* (worship), and recitations, meditation, family-oriented rites of passage, annual festivals, and occasional pilgrimages. Some Hindus leave their social world and material possessions, then engage in lifelong *Sanmyasa* (monastic practices) to achieve Moksha. Hinduism prescribes the eternal duties of honesty, refraining from injuring living beings (*ahimsa*), patience, forbearance, self-restraint, and compassion, among others (“Hinduism,” n.d.).

Islam is the world’s second-largest religion with 24% of the world’s population, living in 50 countries. Followers of Islam or Muslims constitute about 31% of South Asian populations, who make up the largest population of Muslims in the world. Islam teaches that there is only one God (Allah) and that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the messenger of God who is all-powerful and merciful. The primary scripture of Islam is the Holy Quran. According to Islam, at the Final Judgment the righteous will be rewarded with Paradise and unrighteous punished with hell. “Religious concepts and practices include the Five Pillars of Islam, which are obligatory acts of worship, and following Islamic law (*sharia*), which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from banking and welfare to women and the environment” (“Islam,” n.d.). The five basic acts in Islam include faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. Strict adherence to practices like prayers (*Namaaz*) five times a day and fasting during the holy month of *Ramadan* helps its followers attain higher levels of spirituality.

Buddhism is the world’s fourth largest religion with over 7% of the global population

following it. The basic concepts of Buddhism can be presented through Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths are suffering; the cause of suffering, which is desire; the cessation of suffering; and the path of cessation. The Noble Eightfold Path comprises Right Understanding, Right Intent, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration (“Buddhism,” n.d.).

Sikhism is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, the first Guru (1469-1539) and his nine successors. The fundamental beliefs of Sikhism as contained in Guru Granth Sahib, Sikhs’ holy scripture, include “faith and meditation on the name of the one creator, divine unity and equality of all humankind, engaging in selfless service, striving for social justice for the benefit and prosperity of all, and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder’s life.” The Sikhs should give up lust, rage, greed, attachment, and ego. Guru Nanak taught his followers that an “active, creative, and practical life” of “truthfulness, fidelity, self-control, and purity” is above the metaphysical truth and that the ideal man is one who “establishes union with God, knows His Will, and carries out that Will” (“Sikhism,” n.d.).

Jainism, an ancient religion from India, has about five million followers, most of whom live in India. The five great vows of Jainism are non-violence, truth, not stealing, non-attachment to possession, and chastity or celibacy. Jains believe that the entire living world contains living souls that must be regarded with compassion. Jains are strict vegetarians. They believe in reincarnation. Escaping the cycle of life and death is the ultimate liberation for Jains that can be achieved by the elimination of Karmas from the soul. The three guiding principles of Jainism are right belief, right

knowledge, and right conduct (“Religions: Jainism at a glance,” 2009).

Followed by 2.1 billion people worldwide, Christianity has more adherents than any other religion. It is the third largest religion in India, where Christians number 28 million (“Religion in India,” n.d.). Other South Asian countries also have significant populations of Christians. Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament of the Bible, their holy scriptures. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins. One of the central concepts in Christianity is that Jesus gave his life on the Cross (the Crucifixion) and rose from the dead on the third day (the Resurrection). Though Christians believe in only one God, they also believe that there are three elements to this God: God the Father; God the Son; and the Holy Spirit (“Religions: Christianity at a glance,” 2011).

South Asians are religious-minded people who follow their religions as a way of life. One respondent noted that the people who view themselves as very religious are distinctive in their day-to-day behaviours in several ways. They keep themselves more engaged with their families, are more involved in their communities, and are more likely to report being happy with the way things are going on their lives.

South Asians believe that their religion or spiritual beliefs help them understand the deeper meaning of life and its bigger picture, which helps them stay calm in the trying times. The discretion about right and wrong; the courage to do what is right and stand up to what is wrong; compassion for those who need help; truthfulness; humility; contentment; patience; gratitude; forgiveness; courage; fortitude; moderation in behaviour; understanding; and meeting their obligations

toward others – all these help them have better lives and relationships and lead to better physical and mental health. South Asians believe that religion and spirituality can lead one to a healthier life. They teach about living life with consciousness. Religion also helps them imagine an existence beyond this life.

South Asians may consider illnesses a test from God and associate it to past Karmas. Karma is a key concept in South Asian religions. It means different things to different people. To some, it may inspire resilience. (“Let us pay for our Karmas, and then all will be fine.”) Others it may reduce to hopelessness, because it means they are “destined to suffer.” By contrast, to many, Karma may mean power, because it is the tool of change that everyone possesses. (“If you can change your Karma, you can change your destiny.”) Some people associate illness and misfortunes with superstitions, black magic, or evil spirits and may visit fortune-tellers or faith-healers – but go to properly trained physicians of modern medicine as well.

As with religions, many systems of medicine thrive in South Asian countries. In India, the traditional system of healing is *Ayurveda*, which may be centuries old. It takes a holistic approach to sickness and healing. Its fundamental belief is that diseases are only signs of imbalance in human bodies. So, rather than treat the disease, the doctor should treat the patient and restore the balance.

Currently, there is a growing interest in the Ayurvedic psychology. It offers unique concepts of negative emotions being stored in the body as toxin called “Ama” that can be pulled out of the body through individually customized detox therapies for good mental and physical health. However, a fundamental principle of Ayurveda is the balanced lifestyle, combined with physical exercises such as Yoga and

breathing practice such as *Pranayam*. Another important concept of Ayurveda is that food is medicine. This is a preventive approach, because it emphasizes that people should eat the food that is right for them, according to their constitution's ability to ward off illnesses. Practitioners of Ayurveda claim to provide medicines that are made of natural substances, with no/minimal use of chemicals. Another system is Homeopathy, based on the concept of "like cures like."

One advantage of these systems is that they do not require pathology, which is a huge burden for people with limited finances. Another is their holistic approaches to health. However, these systems are mostly used in combination with modern medicine. Many trained doctors draw upon medicines from different systems because one therapy is considered more suitable than others when addressing particular illnesses. People resort to these other systems when modern medicine offers them no help.

Expectations from a Mental Health Professional

The respondents said that what they would expect from psychological counselling is help to improve and gain stability. An example of such a situation would be a person suffering from sleep paralysis and the resultant anxiety or headaches. Sleep paralysis has been found to co-occur with panic or anxiety disorders. It may be caused by stress and may lead to stress. When such a person seeks counselling from a psychologist, they want him/her to explore and identify the issues that are likely triggering it in order to seek a resolution.

The psychological counsellor must dig deep into the patient's lifestyle and psyche and try to understand that person's past experiences in order to grasp the issues that may be affecting their current mental health. For this, the counsellors must also encourage clients to open up. Such encouragement would build and enhance respect and trust between the client and the counsellor.

People may sometimes be reluctant to share personal details about their relations, belief system, or lifestyle. In South Asian culture, a person normally hesitates to express his weak-

nesses or feelings relating to his personal life which may not conform with the religion and social values observed in his or her culture/subculture. These can be related to his/her early life, sometimes to children, about a spouse, or even maybe parents. Open admission of such things may make clients feel guilty. Speaking negatively about loved ones with a stranger may feel like betrayal. Taking responsibility for anything dark or stupid that a person has done in his/her life is never easy.

The respondents thought that a counsellor does not need to do anything special to build a respectful and trusting relationship with his/her client, except to show respect, sensitivity, and empathy. Exhibiting some knowledge of the culture, or respect through simple gestures, such as the cultural greeting "Namaste," may prove an instant ice-breaker in some cases. It may signify to a client that the counsellor cares for the client's cultural background. Were the counsellor to acquire some knowledge of this background, the client may find it easier to explain his/her issues. Putting it simply, to build respectful and trusting relationships with clients, all the coun-

seller needs to do is show respect and trust for their clients and their situations.

To exhibit disinterest in a client's situation or thoughts, or bias against a client and his/her cultural background or values, or to judge a client – such behaviours on the part of a counsellor may deter people from forming respectful or trusting relationships with him/her. Similarly, the counsellor who displays an attitude of superiority, who pretends to know everything that the client is saying, interrupts him/her, imposes solutions to the issue – such a counsellor cannot acquire clients' respect or trust.

The respondents had different opinions about culturally appropriate rules of behaviour. In some faiths, it is appropriate for men not to shake hands with women and for people to avoid eye contact. But make no mistake: the purpose of these behaviours is only to show respect. Similarly, to address a head male first, or adults before children, can be best characterized as a popular custom that signifies little. A few respondents said that they consider these behaviours as signs of a lack of confidence or an inability to treat men and women equally. Most respondents agreed that using a formal name or a respectful title would be considered a good gesture. Respondents said that addressing the clients by their first names would seem more encouraging and friendly.

Respondents were divided over whether or not South Asian culture favours emotional restraint, or open expression and discussion of emotions and feelings. However, they all agreed that even if emotional restraint is considered the better quality, when a South Asian client walks into a counsellor's office, he/she has come prepared to share their feelings. The counsellor can encourage them by explaining how important it is to effective counselling for a client to be forthcoming about their deep-seated fears and anxiety.

When asked how they felt about sharing their personal details with a counsellor, most respondents thought they would be able to do so if they were assured that the information would stay confidential. One respondent further remarked that the counsellor “can help me in becoming more open in sharing my emotions and feelings first, by making me understand its importance and second, by helping me understand how such sharing can improve my mental condition. I may face issues in sharing things about sexual life and religion. Sexual life is quite personal and intimate to be shared with anyone, especially strangers. As far as the religion is concerned, I try not to share my beliefs regarding it because it is quite a sensitive subject.” Most respondents thought that South Asian clients would be comfortable discussing issues related to their childhood, to pre-migration or immigration, racism, or discrimination or any traumatic experiences from the past once a trusting relationship had been built with the counsellor.

Some clients may constantly defy the counsellor's advice through such unhealthy defence mechanisms as denial, avoidance, rationalization, and suppression. The client may be quite unaware of their behaviour. Such resistance can seriously disrupt the counsellor-client relationship. In many cases, resistance may only be a transitory stage in the counselling process, gradually waning after a few sessions that address the issue subtly. The psychological reaction to the counsellor's advice needs deeper insight and understanding. Fear of being misunderstood and judged can make the client reluctant to open up to a counsellor, who should strive to understand the client's moral/social environment.

Within South Asian culture, there is great respect for people of authority and higher levels of education. Some respondents therefore

believe that South Asians would prefer therapists who give clear advice as to what the client should do and how the family can help to facilitate the necessary changes. However, some others thought that a mix of the two would be more welcome. While the counsellor should offer a clear and workable solution or advice to the client, the client must be capable of understanding the situation and acting upon such suggestions.

The idea of equalizing the power between the therapist and the client does not seem feasible if the client is in a vulnerable state of mind due to a pressing mental health concern. The knowledge and position of the counsellor may overwhelm clients and prompt them to resist. The counsellor has to refuse a position of power and endeavour to make the client feel as if he/she is talking to a friend. If the counsellor manages to build a trusting relationship

with the client, the counselling will be effective.

Sometimes clients will be reluctant to share cultural information which runs completely contrary to the Canadian scenario. Just what triggers such psychological turmoil on the part of a client might come as a surprise to a counsellor. Expecting a client to change and advising a course of action to him/her might be taken as a very insensitive gesture. However, helping a client to look at his/her own cultural values and beliefs from a broader perspective may make things work better. It is also important that the counsellor present his/her advice in a very friendly and a respectful way so that the client's feelings are not injured. Kindness and honesty are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

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Conclusion

Seeking support from mental health professionals can be incredibly daunting. In essence, psychotherapy requires that an individual meets with a stranger deemed to be an expert with the goal of being vulnerable and sharing what is most painful and troubling in his or her life. Common fears upon entering therapy include: “Will my therapist think I’m abnormal or flawed in some way? Will he or she understand why I feel the way I do? Will I be able to get my ideas across despite my nervousness?” The act of walking into a room to face a stranger with all of the private hurt and suffering that one has been enduring can be terrifying. In fact, for many people with trauma histories, depression, anxiety or interpersonal stressors, dealing with these issues personally can feel hard enough, never mind sharing them with a stranger. Nevertheless, it seems universal that human beings long to feel understood and psychotherapy is meant to be an avenue that offers such understanding within a safe and compassionate space. Bringing oneself to enter a therapeutic setting that requires painful disclosure and sitting with feelings that are usually avoided is a courageous act. The risk one is taking in counselling is that they may leave the session not feeling understood, resulting in even more suffering and psychological pain.

For immigrant and refugee clients the stakes are even higher in seeking support from Western counsellors. Indeed, their concerns are warranted as the therapists’ understanding of their cultural context will in many cases be limited. It is not surprising that immigrant and refugee populations are often skeptical when considering participating in therapy. The expectation is to share with a therapist who is

likely from a Western background issues that will only make sense through the appropriate cultural lens.

Nevertheless, from the interviews in this project there seemed to be interest in the therapeutic process in each of the cultural communities despite the apparent hesitance shown by participants. Enough interest, in fact, that each of these communities offered sound advice for mental health workers regarding how to increase trust in Western counselling approaches among immigrant and refugee communities. For example, in regards to gaining an understanding of clients’ cultural background, the response was universal in that participants from each of the communities encouraged therapists to seek understanding about their clients’ culture as well as their clients’ own idiosyncratic experience with their unique upbringing. It seemed as though there is an expectation from the various cultural groups that individuals who work in mental health must put in effort so that they are knowledgeable about the cultural context from which their client’s issues and struggles arose. In fact, specific suggestions were provided by participants including consulting with members of their community and researching their culture through a variety of means (internet, literature, interviews etc.). It is clear from the participant responses that an effortful and in-depth understanding the culture one is working with would be beneficial to both therapists and clients.

As was expected, this project highlighted the importance of understanding the perspective of clients through a cross-cultural lens. In a field in which the subjective experience is the

foundation from which all therapeutic work is built, it only makes sense that therapists heed the sound advice from this project's participants. One participant summarizes the intention of this project well by offering the seemingly obvious suggestion that therapists ask how/if their presenting issue is related to their cultural background. While this seems like a very simple and straightforward request it is very likely that many therapists are not asking this particular question. It is this specific line of inquiry that would undoubtedly be helpful not only in treatment planning but also in ther-

apists' ability to build rapport and trust with their clients. If there was ever any hesitation on therapists' part regarding whether or not they should become a *student* of their clients' lives and cultural background, may the insights from the participants in this important project convince them that this kind of education is essential to clients' healing and recovery.

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Latino Canadians

Adriana Lopera Toro, LL.B. has 20 years of experience in labour law. In addition to a Specialty Degree in Labour Law, she also has a Certificate in Human Rights and Humanitarian International Law, Security Training and Threat Awareness in the Supply Chain, and Conflict Management from the Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre. She has worked as an independent litigant, consultant and legal adviser, Treasury/Vice-president of a non-profit organization, designate lecturer in analytical reading, manager of a private company with over 100 employees, logistics coordinator, facilitator of workshops on Managing Interpersonal Conflict, and Legal Support Worker at United Cultures of Canada Association in which role she educated newcomer communities on Canadian laws. Presently, she works as Agency Coordinator, Interpreter Programs for UCCA and as legal Interpreter for the Spanish communities.

Vietnamese Canadians

Thu Ha (Tracy) Tran came to Nanaimo, British Columbia as an international student in 2002. After graduating from Vancouver Island University in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, she moved to Edmonton, Alberta for work. Tracy is currently working as the community coordinator at the Vietnamese Canadian Friendship Society (VCFS), a nonprofit organization which has been active since 1991. Married with two young children, and living in the downtown area, she brings to her work a non-judgmental perspective and an open mind regarding cultures and differences. Tracy enjoys taking her

children to community events, Vietnamese groups/churches, and extracurricular activities.

Somali Canadians

Fowzia Isse is a Community and Family Development Consultant with over 20 years of experience working with families, children, youth, and ethnic communities in Canada. She worked in various areas, such as refugee assistance, family and youth development, integration issues, and community building. She has worked significantly with at-risk populations such as the Aboriginal and East African communities in the areas of educational development, health, social issues, human rights, and youth protection as well as parenting skills and advocacy. She has also worked with the federal, provincial, and municipal governments in Canada developing programs for at-risk communities and vulnerable populations assisting in creating cohesive, safe, and effective community environments for families and children. Fowzia Isse graduated with a Bachelor of Political Science in Somali, Mogadishu. She furthered her education and became certified in resiliency and trauma, conflict resolution, anger management, early childhood brain development, and human development.

Chinese Canadians

Lina Shaw is a Ph.D. student from the University of Alberta, finishing her studies in contemporary Russian religious literature this year. She taught Russian language and literature at the Beijing Foreign Studies University in China for more than ten years before moving to Canada. Lina is interested in linguistics, translation, and the history of Western culture. She

volunteers as an interpreter/translator for Edmonton's Chinese and Russian communities and with the department of Western Canadian History at the Royal Alberta Museum.

Kitty Choi is a Registered Social Worker with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work in 2017 from Dalhousie University and a Bachelor's Degree in Arts in 2000 from the University of Hong Kong. She is the Team Lead of Responding to Family Violence in the Chinese Community Program, a Victim Services Community-based Program funded by Alberta Justice and Solicitor General. Kitty has been working with Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking victims directly impacted by family violence and human trafficking to provide ongoing and outreach supports since 2010. She is also on the roster of Alberta Courts as a qualified Cantonese interpreter for criminal and civil law matters.

Polish Canadians

Katarzyna Cuvilier has a Master's Degree in Philosophy, a certificate in Logic Based Therapy, a Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Design, and a postgraduate diploma in Communication. She has worked in International Relations at the University of Silesia in Poland, as a Multicultural Family Law Facilitator/Interpreter for United Cultures of Canada Association, and as a graphic designer for the Academic Center of Dentistry and Specialized Medicine. Currently she also works as a drum and art instructor at the Visionary Center for The Performing Arts.

Filipino Canadians

Veron Gaban hails from Iloilo City, Philippines where she received her Bachelor degree in Biological Sciences Magna cum laude, and was conferred the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 2004 from West Visayas State University. She has undergone training in Family Medicine, Oc-

cupational Medicine, and in Obstetrics and Gynecology. While pursuing her Canadian medical license, she is utilizing her extensive medical experience by teaching Medical Administration and serving as a Consultant and Clinic Manager. Since she also has a journalism background, she sometimes dabbles as a freelance editor and contributor. Veron counts reading, writing, and travelling among her myriad interests.

Coptic Canadians

Fatin Khalil was born and raised in Sudan. She graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Accounting Section at the Khartoum Branch of Cairo University. In June 1984, her family was granted Egyptian nationality and moved to Egypt where she worked in executive secretarial positions for some of the biggest commercial companies such as Indconsult Company and Textile Dept. In 2001, she, with another partner, established her own business and became the sole agents and distributors for different international textile and tricot fibers and yarns manufacturers. In 2012, due to the rising political strife in Egypt, she decided to apply for asylum in Canada and was granted a refugee status in 2013. She became a Canadian citizen in June 2018. Being born in Sudan, she gained a valuable experience in understanding different cultures i.e. Sudanese, South Sudanese, Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian and Ethiopian. This experience helped her a lot in her role as an Arabic Community Connector with the ASSIST Community Services Centre in which role she helped newcomers and as an Arabic interpreter with the United Cultures of Canada Association, providing professional interpreting to several legal and non-legal organizations in Edmonton.

Sandra A. was born in Khartoum. She completed her elementary and high school education at

a British school. She went on to complete a take bachelor's degree in medicine from the University of Medical Sciences and graduated in 2012 with distinction. After which she moved to Canada in 2014. Toronto, Canada with my family to Edmonton in 2017 pursuing her dream to become a licensed doctor. Currently, she works as a medical assistant at a clinic and plans to apply for her residency in the fall of 2018.

Sami Fahmy, Ph.D., P.Eng, PMP, RMP, DTM was born in Cairo, Egypt, where he completed his engineering degree before moving to Canada in 1975. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Calgary in Project Management and has held several key positions in private and public entities. He is an expert in project management, risk management and interpersonal communication skills. Dr. Fahmy is very active in his Egyptian community, specifically the Canadian Coptic Community Centre (CCCC), and is committed to helping new immigrants reach their full potential so they are able to contribute to the Canadian Society. Dr. Fahmy chairs committees for the design and implementation of the Youth Leadership Program and Christian Sexuality Education Program. He lives in Edmonton, Alberta and is currently working as a consultant doing what he loves – teaching and educating project managers to excel in managing their projects.

South Asian Canadians

Amber Khan, M.B.A., has over 15 years of experience working in administration, resource development and career counselling. She has been working in the field of education and managing administrative, monetary and social activities related to youth mentorship for about 10 years. She has also coordinated projects to raise awareness and disseminate information on breast health in six different communities.

This project, funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, sought to connect marginalized women with necessary resources and was facilitated by educators and interpreters in their first languages. She also worked as a Community Connector for South Asian Communities, a position in which she provided settlement assistance to various South Asian groups. She has also worked as Agency Coordinator for Interpreter Program for UCCA and as a legal Interpreter for the South Asian community. Currently, she is working as Settlement Counselor in a not profit organization and is a certified Settlement Practitioner.

Reshma Raval holds a master's degree in Business Administration, Post Graduate Diploma in Finance and Accounting and a Bachelor of Commerce degree, which she obtained from a prestigious university in India with distinction. She is a business management professional with extensive experience in financial administration and management. She also has acquired significant experience in educational counseling. Currently, she is working at the CDI college as a Finance Administrator in which role she works diligently to explore and present suitable financing options for students who are seeking to upgrade for better prospects. She is extremely passionate about community issues and endeavours to give back to community through paid or volunteer opportunities whenever possible.

Aamena Kapasi is a Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta in the School and Clinical Child Psychology program. Aamena completed her B.Sc. in Psychology at the University of Alberta and her M.A. in Counselling Psychology at the University of Western Ontario. Aamena is interested in how culture influences psychological health, and cultural considerations in mental health counselling.

Latika Srivastava, LL.M., Barrister and Solicitor, legal instructor, is a co-author of *Perspectives on Woman Abuse, Crimes, Not Cultures*, *A Self-Help Guide for Victims of Domestic Violence and International Arranged Marriages* and a co-editor of *HerStory of Equality*. She has researched and written on various legal issues related to immigrant communities. Prior to her immigration to Canada she worked as an Assistant Professor at the Delhi University.

Cultural Contexts is a great resource for Canadian mental health practitioners. I appreciate that it's practical, personal, and offers perspectives from different cultural groups. It's helpful to have an updated resource in this area that is easy-to-read and concise. Thank-you for all of your efforts!

Christina Bell, Registered Psychologist

This is a beautiful resource for students, seasoned therapists and everyone in between. In a profession where cultural competence is fundamental to the work we do, this is a wonderful resource to guide practice and promote important self-reflection. Amazing work

Dr. Erica Dunn, Registered Psychologist

What a great resource for improving understanding of different cultures and communities. I can see this being very useful in my clinical work. Super cool and useful!

Dr. Natsumi Sawada, Registered Psychologist

This is an awesome book!!!! It is a very practical and informational guide to understanding multiple layers of an individual's culture. It raises important questions and issues for helping professionals to consider exploring with their clients. I would highly recommend this book to any practitioner."

Dr. Allison Foskett, Registered Psychologist

A great resource to use as a starting point with getting to know my clients' cultural context. This easy to use and accessible resource provides information that is important for helping professionals to be aware of when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds than their own. From this foundation, professionals can more easily and accurately explore relevant issues and potential resources for their clients.

Dr. Tatiana LoVerso, Registered Psychologist

Bringing oneself to enter a counselling setting that requires disclosure of painful feelings and experiences can be very intimidating for clients beginning the therapeutic process. To have one's story truly heard and understood within a compassionate and non-judgmental space feels essential to those seeking support.

For immigrant and refugee clients, feeling understood is critical as well, and yet many issues these individuals face can only become clear to the therapist when viewed through the appropriate cultural lens.

The participants in this manual identified an interest in the therapeutic process in eight of Canada's cultural communities: Latino, Somali, Vietnamese, Chinese, Polish, Filipino, Coptic, and South Asian. Members of each community were surveyed as to what mental health workers can do to increase the trust of immigrants and refugees in Western counselling practices, and especially, what basic information counsellors require regarding the cultural context in which a client's issues and struggles arose.

What factors triggered their decision to immigrate to Canada? What challenges do they face during settlement? What aspects of the land of their birth do they retain, cherish, celebrate, or lament? What does the community maintain or practice when it comes to child-rearing, marriage, and the status of women and the elderly? How influential are community and religious institutions in their lives? What behaviours, words and attitudes might create a safe therapeutic environment for clients from this community?

The answers to these questions and many more can be found in this resource, which serves as a foundation for therapists hoping to work with individuals in a way that demonstrates cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness. This book illustrates how being genuinely curious as a therapist and actively seeking to learn from one's clients is integral to understanding their experience and facilitating change.

