

**Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research
Programme**
Research Report

**Critical Mixed-Race Theory: Analyzing the Identities of South Asian to
Canadian Immigration on Mixed-Race Women**

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Introduction

“You’re the sun, you’ve never seen the night
But you hear its song from the morning birds.
Well, I’m not the moon, I’m not even a star,
But awake at night, I’ll be singing to the birds.”

- *Your Best American Girl* by Mitski

Words cannot describe the pain, confusion, and terror of losing your sense of identity. This became clear to me on my first listen to Japanese-American artist Mitski’s third album, *Puberty 2*. Particularly fascinated with the song previously referenced, *Your Best American Girl*, I acknowledged my own conflict with racial identity and misunderstanding of my place in the world. For I am not the sun, nor am I the moon, or even the faintest star of existence — I am an amalgamation of seemingly whole bodies fastened together by a thing called genetics. Perhaps this sounds like nonsense (in some ways, it is), but that is exactly how the world has sought to make children of mixed heritage feel. You are not one, yet not another either. A math equation, probably, or just a mistake. Not whole enough for a single category; therefore, barely human.

The world exists to isolate those who cannot be deemed within a single category — one cannot follow the laws of Catholicism while practicing Hinduism at the same time. It is contradictory and, in society’s eyes, abnormal. A similar case has been applied to racial politics. Interracial couples have been criticized for the length of their existence and beyond. It is, seemingly, “unnatural” to love one of another race.

Furthermore, if they are to bear children, that child is inadequate and unwhole within societal means — meaning, they cannot be categorized by standardized methods of classification. Consider the many censuses that fail to recognize mixed race as a viable option for race classification; you *must* be one or the other. Otherwise, it becomes confusing. Otherwise, you are simply a portion of what you think you are.

This research seeks to highlight the tumultuous and often overlooked experiences of biracialism, particularly relating to young women with a South Asian immigrant parent. With reflective thought on aspects of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the many theorists who have progressed the field, as well as integrating the history of women-of-colour's rights in such studies, this paper explores the deeper meaning behind the language and diction used against biracial individuals. It strives to heal the wounds unconsciously built by the world and provide an alternative method of identification that not only praises their multiracialism, but accepts their wholeness of being.

What is Critical Race Theory?

The field of race studies expanded itself amongst the many scholars and activists spearheading the movement circa the 1970s. Considering a myriad of issues, from standardized civil rights to economics to the unconscious bias that exists within us all, this field has persistently pushed for societal advancement towards the betterment of treatment amongst racialized people. (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023, p. 3 - 4) Early writers of the movement ranged from lawyers and legal scholars, such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, who realized that the progression of rights since the movements of the 1960s had begun to fall flat in the face of recurring racist activity. From this point, CRT gained its theories from the insights of three previous movements: (1) critical legal studies; (2) radical feminism; and (3) ethnic studies. (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023, p. 5)

Critical legal studies brought forth concepts of legal indeterminacy — an idea more commonly understood as the indefinitive nature of the “correct” legal results. This highlights the varied mentalities that approach legal cases with respect to bias, interpretation, and authority. Furthermore, CRT incorporated aspects of skepticism of triumphalism, as its central focus was to “explore the manner in which legal doctrine and legal education and the practices of legal institutions work to buttress and support a pervasive system of oppressive, inequalitarian relations.” (Fitzpatrick and Hunt, 1987, p. 1 - 2)

As for radical feminism, CRT reckons with the feminist theory that examines the relationship between power and social roles, often built on patriarchal means. Domination, as radical feminists explained, sees patterns and habits of authoritative “male values” that seek to ignore, neglect, and diminish those opposing “female values.” At least, as Willis interprets, that is how radical feminism came to evolve; however, this is more accurately described as cultural feminism. What CRT found most striking about radical feminism — the original cause, more so than its evolution — was the rejection of opposing values of men and women being, innately, sexist. (Willis, 1984, p. 91) Such ideology indicates indifference, which radical feminists, and subsequently CRT, sought to destroy. With aspirations to end male supremacy in all facets, CRT adapted these theories of equalism.

The final component of CRT involves ethnic studies, which, as the name suggests, refers to the discipline of analyzing identities other than the varying ethnicities in the world. This movement started within educational spaces to create better access to higher education for students of colour, changes in standard curriculum that remain out of touch, promotion and recruitment of more professors of colour, and the formation of an ethnic studies programme. (Hu-DeHart, 1993, p. 51) The emphasis CRT gained from these theorists was that notions, such as “the need to develop ideas and texts centred around each group and its foundational events and histories.” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023, p. 5) The ethnic studies focus on group mentality and community aided in building the foundations of CRT as it is known today.

Critical Race Theory incorporates the many aspects of these pivotal movements through integration of concepts and notions, formulating its primary tenets. First being that racism is an ordinary phenomenon — through means of “normal science” and the commonality of racist mentality, it is inadequate to describe racism as unnatural to the human psyche when, from a young age, we are taught to identify difference. This makes the primary antagonist of CRT, racism, particularly hard to beat. It goes unacknowledged by the mind as a result of societal influences, which, despite our best efforts, take precedence. Thus, while you may consider yourself “colour blind,” there is still a likelihood that you subscribe to racist ideology (i.e., mortgage redlining).

The next attribute of CRT refers to material determinism — a concept that racism persists through developing the interests of white elites, materially, and working-class whites, physically. Society, according to Delgado and Stefancic, has made minimal efforts to eradicate this. We exist and (attempt to) survive in a white society as non-white bodies. Thus, we are sacrificing our interests in favour of what is seen as the “supreme race”: white. In the eyes of CRT, however, this holds deeper meaning — what *is* race? According to theorists, “race and races are products of social thought and relations.” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023, p. 9) This became apparent with the realization that there are no biological or genetic realities that connect one race to another; rather, there are categories society has cast upon us by means of invention, then division, and retirement, when it is no longer convenient.

CRT further investigates the consequences of racialization through means of legal analysis and social science. This case is quite familiar, I would assume — a Black person is held guilty of a crime that a white person can easily get away with. Yet, with the knowledge that there is no biological difference between Black and white persons, what holds us to this mindset? The ordinariness of racism is indoctrinated in our psyche, beyond a point of complete erasure. However, as CRT strives to negotiate, in acknowledgement, discomfort, and education, we can build a mentality that fights against such criticism and identifies a human for as they really are.

Crossroads: The Intersection of Racial Politics and Women’s Rights

In the words of the brilliant Simone de Beauvoir, “It is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, established the One.” (de Beauvoir, 1949/2007, p. 256) In further reading of de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, the tale is familiarized with the varied experiences of said “Other.” Gender, alongside race, both fall under authoritarian means of control — meaning, the privileged, whether knowing it or not, withhold the autonomy of the Other, in favour of their Oneness. For example, while men dictate the rules by which women are meant to follow, white elites have historically controlled the means by which persons of colour are meant to survive. The similarities between the two instances are uncanny; almost as if our diversity is a fork in the road, and by falling into a “category” that is deemed

inferior, we are forced to take the road less traveled by. Albeit, it may not be as peaceful as Frost so famously claimed.

It comes as no surprise to me to claim that women are the inferior sex — historically speaking, there is much evidence to support such a statement. Consider the Suffrages, perhaps, or even the Bible. With respect to de Beauvoir's particularly Christian-centred analysis of femininity as Otherment, women are considered a byproduct of men. After all, Eve was born from Adam, who was born from God. Men have since adopted a demigod mentality, for they derived from God, and thus, women derived from them. De Beauvoir continues to study the seemingly nonexistence of women, stating, "Thus humanity is male and man defined woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being." (de Beauvoir, 1949/2007, p. 255) Broad generalizations of womanhood have followed us since the dawn of time — undermining the education (if received), success, and accomplishments we achieve through arguments that their sex is meant for the singular job of motherhood. As a result, much of their freedom has been stripped from their palms, long before they are old enough, *conscious* enough, to understand what they can do with it.

Researching considerably scriptural feminist texts for this paper, I was shocked to identify the striking similarities of experiences between womanhood and racialization. This led me down a rabbit hole of understanding how one can exist if both woman and racialized, and understanding how this takes place in the lives of biracial children. As previously stated from personal experience, the wholeness of my biracial identity has been a constant question in the minds of those who perceive me. This thought is deepened by my womanhood — an aspect that holds roots of nonexistence or illegitimacy. Audre Lorde, a primary feminist thinker, is a key reference for this case. In her essay *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House*, she defines the effects of racialization on women: "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable." (Lorde, 1979/2007, p. 332) Similar to the sentiments of CRT, it appears that indifference to one's differences is simply an ordinary part of society.

The world in which we exist seeks to pick and choose the “acceptable” kinds of femininity — the white kinds rather than racialized kinds; the kinds that are heterosexual rather than lesbian; the kinds that are wealthy rather than poor, etc. Thus, being a woman, paired with being racialized, homosexual, poor, disabled, aged, and so on, can only limit your chances of survival. In *Towards Equality*, a statement made by the Committee on the Status of Women in India, they claim, “Though women do not constitute a minority numerically, they are acquiring the features of one by the inequality of class, status, and political power.” (1974/2007, p. 309) Womanhood is not considered a minority disadvantage as race, class, sexuality, and such may be. However, it is evident through a brief look at our history that there stands a significant lack of care for women and their intersectionalities.

Introduction to Mixed-Race Politics

The question remains, amongst descriptions of CRT and its intersections with gendered politics, where do multiracial people fall amongst this? Mixed-race politics steer in a severely different direction from those of racialized politics, with identity being the main point of contention. To further investigate the premises of mixed-race politics, I will be referring to articles written by various biracial authors from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in an anthology series titled *Mixed Race Student Politics*.

In order to understand where biracialism stands amongst these conversations, it is important to define the concept of symbolic identity. Tomás R. Jiménez proposes that symbolic identity is “a nostalgic alliance to the culture of the immigrant generation... [that] stems from their limited experience and knowledge of their ethnic background.” (Jiménez, 2004/2019, p. 60) In deeper analysis of this type of identity, however, it becomes clear that this is often an inadequate stance for biracial individuals to take upon, given their often limited and inaccessible relations to their heritage. Through the means of assimilation and integration of immigrants in the Western world, namely, the States and Canada, ethnic identities are restricted from becoming symbolic.

Thus, this builds what is known as the multiracial consciousness. Mixed-race individuals have since defined their identities as it pertains to their family history, though many struggles persistently

taunt the minds of multiracial persons. In a 1992 article, Cynthia Nakashima claims that there are three variable objectives: “to struggle for inclusion and legitimacy in traditional ethnic communities, to shape a common identity and agenda among multiracial people, and to break down dominant racial ideologies to create cross-cultural communities.” (1992/2019, p. 61) Societal notions of “biological culture” — the concept that culture is passed through genetics — thereby limits the soil on which biracial individuals grow their identities upon and dilutes their culture. The multiracial consciousness is then affected by racial markers, such as “passing.” For a multiracial person to be considered “passing,” this refers to their physical appearance’s racial ambiguity that often distorts the perception of their race. (Daniel, 1992/2019, p. 64)

Naturally, this has led multiracial people to feel inadequate in their own skin — forsaken within their homes. In a reflection written by James Ong, they state, “being multiracial has always made me feel like an insider *and* an outsider... I am reminded on an almost daily basis that identity is defined through complex social negotiations.” (Ong, 2019, p. 93) Particularly striking is how Ong explains their relationship with being Wasian — a contemporary term coined by those who are simultaneously of white and Asian descent. Ong recalls a time when his mother reiterated to them that they would always be perceived as “half individual in a society that wouldn’t accept [them] as white or Chinese.” (Ong, 2019, p. 94) There is no wholeness of identity in multiracialism. Since you cannot be categorized as simply one or another, you become alien to yourself.

And within the racist patriarchy we exist under, one can imagine the variety of names that multiracial people have consistently been prescribed to — half-blood, mutt, half-breed, chimera, etc. In another reflection by Sophia Cole, they emphasize the importance of racial purity in current society. “I find that such words have no purpose other than to measure me as less than whole on the racial purity scale. It reminds me of forced sterilization, segregation, anti-miscegenation laws, genocide, scientific racism, and eugenics, and many other movements. It reminds me of how such techniques were and are used within the United States of America to suppress, separate, dehumanize, and even exterminate groups of people, all in the name of protecting another group’s racial purity.” (Cole, 2019, p. 111)

As a result, much of mixed-race politics revolves around the basis of racial definition. Another effort to understand humanity, and thereby, categorize us as one. However, multiracialism does not so easily fit into one box or another. The term multiracial itself has a myriad of different meanings to different people. Is there such an identification a person of two or more backgrounds can exist by? This study seeks to dive deeper into that question, looking at the lives of South Asian-Canadian women to do so.

A Multiracial Hot Spot

It comes without a doubt that Toronto, and Canada in general, has become a hot spot for global migration. According to a study provided by Statistics Canada, the number of South Asian immigrants to Canada from 1996 to 2021 has increased by 229.39% over the course of a 25-year period. (StatsCan, 2024) Within this period, the number of South Asian immigrants to Canada has increased by over a million, resulting in a total of approximately 1.5 million immigrants by the year 2021. Amongst the South Asian populations, the most immigrated from countries include India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Refer to *Fig. 1* to view the proportion of immigrants from these top three countries in a 20-year period from 2001 to 2021. It appears that, while Indian immigrants continue to rapidly increase, Pakistani and Sri Lankan immigrants have experienced a steady decrease in recent years. It is also important to note, with the exception of those born in Sri Lanka, that “slightly more than half of all South Asian immigrants were admitted as economic immigrants.” (StatsCan, 2024) Thus, explaining the increase in mobility from South Asia to Canada as a result of economic development, as provided by the Government of Canada.

While this study was released in 2024, with numbers from three years prior, the sentiments remain the same: South Asian immigration to Canada is consistently increasing, even if there have been significant drops within certain countries to migrate elsewhere. Moving forward, this knowledge will aid the understanding of universal South Asian experiences amongst immigrants, alongside helping navigate the rise of biracialism in Canada and the consequences of such.

South Asian Experiences in Canada

The individualized experiences of South Asian women in Canada are hard to encapsulate in a single section. Perhaps, even, a whole report could be dedicated to this topic and its queries. In a brief synopsis of academic review, I have been able to identify patterns of habit and behaviour that become challenging for any person to encounter — especially when you add the persistent disadvantage of woman-of-colourhood.

One text I found particularly advancing and eye-opening on this topic was psychotherapist and author Fahima Ali's *Navigating Life as a Brown Girl: A Therapist's Guide for South Asian Women*. In this empowering novel that studies the transition of culture from South Asia to the Western world, alongside the added elements of psychological expertise that Ali provides, this piece is a source of understanding for South Asian women, if one so wishes to investigate further. Simply within the introduction, it is clear what the expectation of Brown women is: to be complacent, to ever-endure, and most of all, to remain quiet, despite it all.

Ali highlights the “invisible life” to which many South Asian women are subjected. A history of cultural normality is enforced upon their bodies that lingers in the edges of their North American lives. Expectations of success, behaviour, and tradition are highly pertinent. Do well in school, get married when you are supposed to, avoid dismantling your family's honour. And if you cannot achieve it, you are left with an enduring guilt, which Ali coins as “brown girl guilt” (Ali, 2026, p. 33). She describes the controlling nature of this guilt that guides countless Brown women to obey, to please, to *do as they should*.

Then again, one may argue that we are in North America now; we can live by the rules of the commonfolk. This may be true, to some extent. But cultural normality persists in a thing we call *generational trauma*. This is “the thread that binds you to the unexpressed pain of those who came before you. It isn't limited to your lifetime; it's the unresolved wounds, fears and struggles carried by your parents, grandparents and even earlier generations, often without ever being named or addressed.” (Ali, 2026, p. 142 - 143) While Ali extrapolates generational trauma with respect to other aspects of the South Asian identity, it presents itself in many facets.

Racism, as we previously discussed, has a tendency to leave a lasting mark on an individual. Thus, amongst the number of South Asian immigrants to Canada, those who were unable to escape the claws of our racist patriarchy are left to carry their hurt and neglect to their successors. For a rather personal example, my father, who immigrated from India at 16-years-old, carries with him the experiences of immigrating in the 1990s. The world was underdeveloped, and immigration was still highly criticized, yet he recounts the time as rather positive, despite having its downsides. My father, never the one to see the cup as half-empty, knows that he dealt with racism. That did not stop him. There was so much else to look for and praise in the “land of the free.” Instead, this was a point of motivation for him, and since those days, he has built an undeniable legacy that I am proud to say is my birthright.

Albeit with all his hard work and dedication, there remain points of trauma that we have yet to discuss. My name, for example. Faith Marion Kalia. Hell, if it were not for my last name, I would easily pass as a white person. My father loves the name, still, and insists that it was not an effort to integrate me into Canadian culture. However, while it may not be my case, this is not an uncommon occurrence for children of immigrants living in Canada. In Anglicizing our names, we take from society what they wish to take from us — our dignity. In our quiet assimilation, we reclaim what is ours. Something as simple as our names can remain safe for us to keep. This is not a universal experience, I must emphasize. Many South Asian immigrants continue to carry cultural names across their succeeding generations. This does shed light on a particular aspect of South Asian-Canadian experiences, while it may not be my own.

This is just a brief overview of select South Asian experiences in Canada. There is much left uncovered. Perhaps one day, I will dive further into the commonality of these occurrences. For the meantime, I leave it at this: the years of trauma built into the forefront of our immigrant parents’ minds have thereby resulted in shame, neglect, and rejection of our culture. With that being said, that is not to say South Asian representation does not exist. In sacred spaces, from at home to at the Temple, we experience our South Asianness as we desire. It is not hidden, not a secret, but not for the

white elites to take and taint, either. South Asian identity is our own, just as much as the Canadian identity is. You will not — *cannot* — erase our history.

Identity Politics: The Dictator of Multiracialism

Identity politics, a term first used by Anspach in 1979 to “refer to activism by people with disabilities to transform both self- and societal conceptions of people with disabilities.” (Bernstein, 2005, p. 47) It has since evolved beyond the realm of disability studies and has come to encapsulate occurrences within the women’s movement, civil rights, 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, and most significantly to this research, multiracialism. Identity politics, as a field, has introduced varying walks of life as innately political, including culture, sexuality, and lifestyle. The iffy part of such politics remains that it may lean either right or left, depending on who is speaking about it. While identity politics holds roots in Marxism and Neo-Marxism — both of which are left-leaning fields of politics — it has also been weaponized by the far right to control and regulate the means under which denigrated groups and cultures express their identity. This results from its relations to the concept of political correctness. Barbara Epstein (1995) defines political correctness as “a way to attack racial inclusion efforts and curricular reform on campuses, while at the same time promoting a specific set of conservative values.” (Bernstein, 2005, p. 51)

In multiculturalist studies, identity politics is primarily concerned with language. Smelser and Alexander (1999) negotiate the common debate amongst radical multiculturalists and their traditionalist opponents. The former argues that diversity emphasizes the “highest moral good,” while the latter contends that the division of identity groups has threatened the cultural framework of American society. (Bernstein, 2005, p. 51) Thus, what remains of identity politics is that language and our intentional use of it have an impact on how one may perceive their own resulting identity.

In the case of multiracialism, it is difficult to navigate racial identity, as it has no definitive answer. Increased mobility and migration in recent years have resulted in connections of complex identities that cannot be understood through normal conventions of language. According to Rocha,

much of the mainstream Critical Mixed-Race Theory — which I will further refer to as CMRT — is anchored in geographical and philosophical contexts coined by the West. (Rocha, 2018, p. 510)

Much of our knowledge of CMRT is gained from the Western understandings of it, given its mobility rates. In developing CMRT, location and context play a pivotal role. As race is based on phenotype and biological differentiation, mixing race contradicts these understandings, for it is biologically meaningless. Consequently, this is where much of societal contention with biracialism derives from. Understandings of mixed-race individuals seem to conflict scholars with its lack of blood purity and descent. However, it can also challenge scholars to review their theories from a different lens — one that can deconstruct the paradigms surrounding race and emphasize the permeable nature of such social constrictions. (Rocha, 2018, p. 511)

Mixedness does not align with social norms, as is evident; however, perhaps it is not mixedness that continues to challenge the conceptual development of society. Identity politics, as spoken by the far right, seeks to take down mixed-race individuals and cast them aside as uncategorized, unwhole. But perhaps the gap in understanding lies in our own internalized inability to accept the ever-changing nature of the world. As time has progressed, humans have become more connected than ever, with interracialism stemming as a result of this connectedness. My question for these scholars is this: what stands between us and your so-called categorization? Is it the complexity of our identities or simply your ignorance of our diversity? With respect to understanding and growing as an academic, I urge you to consider the following cases presented by mixed-race South Asian women residing in Toronto, Ontario, and see exactly what is so unwhole about these bodies.

Perceptions of Multiracialism in Toronto: Methodology

With respect to advancing the field of CMRT, I have invited five young women between the ages of 18 - 25 who identify as biracial South Asians and live within the Greater Toronto Area to answer a questionnaire designed to further investigate their life experiences as mixed individuals. For the purposes of this paper, and to ensure the protection of the identities of these five young women, each participant will be referred to as Person A, Person B, and so on and so forth.

The objective of this questionnaire is to identify the similarities, differences, and range of emotions one may encounter through living multiracialism. The following section highlights the amalgamation of lives among biracial people, even with a shared underlying South Asian identity. Comparisons will be made between public perceptions of mixedness and the individualized perceptions of the same topic.

Whether or not you are a mixed-race South Asian and can relate to these experiences, I advise that you carry on with the caution that many of these discussions can be triggering. If you are struggling to grapple with the discussions outlined ahead, I have listed a series of resources for support in the *Appendix*.

Perception of Multiracialism in Toronto: Results

When asked to describe their experiences growing up as a biracial South Asian in three words, the responses were as follows:

20% of participants felt confused, adaptive, and progressive.

13.3% of participants felt isolated and inspired.

6.7% of participants felt imposterism and impartial.

Refer to *Fig. 2*

Strikingly, it appears that not a single person had an overall positive or negative experience. While most claims made stated an overarching sense of confusion with their identity, a similar number continued to reiterate their personal paradox of feeling simultaneously empowered and secluded by their identity. Some people had no feelings about their identity, while others had many. The varying degrees in which they felt integrated with their South Asian heritage ranged from knowing almost nothing to regularly attending cultural ceremonies and events.

A majority of participants only speak English at home, while the minority spoke a variety of languages, including, but not limited to, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Kutchi, Bengali, and Telugu. The English-speaking majority claimed that their parents attempted to teach them their native languages, but as a result of their immigration and Canadian integration, much of their lessons did not stick.

Code-adaptation was common amongst this group — 4% of participants stated that their families often transitioned between speaking English and other languages amongst family members, if not explicitly to the participants themselves.

As for cultural awareness, participants collectively agreed that they have known of their mixedness since an early age. With respect to their personal sentiments about their biracialism, many of the responses were location-dependent. For those living in multicultural regions of the GTA, such as Mississauga, their biracialism was not a significant factor in their life, as they were surrounded by people of similar heritage. In other instances, such as the following case for Person A, they state, “I [do] remember one experience where a kid was surprised to see my mom (who is white), and asked if I was adopted, because my skin tone is more of a light brown. Although I had no issue with people thinking I was adopted, I was surprised to see him surprised, because I felt like my appearance was a pretty even mix between my parents. It was definitely confusing growing up, and sometimes frustrating to explain that, yes, my parents are my biological parents; they just happen to be different races.”

When asked about how others received their identities, many claimed that, in living in Toronto, it has been more accepting, with select cases that have made them feel uncomfortable. Person B recounts the number of times they had been referred to as “exotic,” while Person C recalls the time their friends told them “they were not Indian enough” as they are Muslim and decided to wear a scarf to school that day.

Person D shares a particularly interesting case. As a white, East Asian, and South Asian individual, they recollect moments when they felt most ashamed of their South Asian heritage, as it was not considered “desirable” or “trendy.” They admit that much of this shame has passed over the years, and they have grown particularly fond of their mixed heritage, but continue to say, “I felt as though there was a stigma around being Indian.” They reiterate that this was not a result of any specific actions or intentions from their peers, but simply an idea thrown upon them by the fact of Western society.

Despite the effects that Western society evidently had on these young women, their families continued to manage their experiences of their specific South Asian diasporas in their lives. Person A, who grew up in a multicultural neighbourhood, found that proximity to family fostered and

strengthened this relationship they have with their diaspora. Person C and D share the sentiment that religion allows them to remain connected to their South Asian culture through means of tradition, ceremony, and celebration. Person E claims that their relationship to their diaspora came from geographical proximity, having lived in Hyderabad and Saudia before moving to Toronto. “Toronto was easier to live in because of the blend of cultures,” they state.

Those who identify as white-passing biracial South Asian’s share that this invoked a sense of imposter syndrome. “Because those around me view me as white, often forgetting or not knowing I’m biracial, I feel an odd sense of social awkwardness if I do lean into that aspect of myself, even though I know I shouldn’t.” As for those who do not identify as white-passing biracial South Asian, they share their experiences of being perceived as “ethnically ambiguous” with people often forgetting that they are South Asian. Person C states, “I don’t know if I necessarily look like a perfect mix of being Indian and white, but it’s what I am, and I look how I look — so I don’t totally get it when people are shocked by my ethnicity.”

The overall consensus of this questionnaire was a mix of pride and loss — an understanding and deep love for who you are, yet the external factor of grappling with Western notions of your identity. The majority, if not all, of these young women shared their experiences of feeling like an outsider, whether they were passing or not. A communal sense of understanding seemed to carry throughout each response — a brief moment where they felt seen. Where *I* felt seen. While there is no excuse for the degradation many mixed people experience in light of racial purity and identity politics that govern our sense of self, there is comfort in knowing that, even if it feels like it, you are not the only one.

When asked if they would choose to exist as a monoracial person, each and every participant emphasized that they would never sacrifice any part of themselves to feel more integrated in society. And despite the hours at my desk, studying books upon books, I think that is exactly what I needed to hear in order to construct this conclusion.

A Biracial Girl's Guide to Feeling Comfortable In Your Own Skin

This report sought to find an answer to the universal uncertainty that mixed-race individuals experience daily. Answers to the question of “...what are you?” and rejection of the theorists who claim that we do not exist. I embarked on this journey with the knowledge that I would have to reconcile with some parts of my identity that I have let linger for too long. I left it up to the experts to decide what is right about my identity and what is wrong. I researched for hours what else I could be, if not wholly human. Sick and tired of the constant questioning of my identity, the belittlement of my experiences, and the incompleteness of myself, this paper was supposed to be my end to that. In reality, as this chapter comes to a close, I realize with shocking certainty that, perhaps, I was wrong.

Amongst the varied field of Critical Mixed-Race Theory that seeks to analyze our bodies, blood, and brains, I propose a new branch of identification — a unique, personalized identity that can only be claimed by you. Our identities need not be defined, for it is ours to keep and to love and to nurture. Perhaps society cannot categorize us — perhaps that is exactly what the resistance needs. An end to categorization, to segregation, to unwholliness of the whole body. Our history exists cross-culturally, around the globe that so many strive to explore. We exist in places that people pay thousands to go to, and we exist in a world where many of us can see each other and know that we are one. What is there not to be proud of? The mixedness of our skin, of our blood, does not take away from who we are as humans, at the end of the day.

You need not be one or the other. You are wholly one and the other, as I am wholly Indian and Irish. You are allowed to be confused. It is part of the journey of acceptance. So are imposterism, pride, isolation, and progression. Subsequently, you are allowed to confuse the world. It is not their place to understand who *you* are. Identity politics exists to govern an entity that is not theirs to own. Remember that this body is your only one, for as long as we last on this Earth. Spending your existence governing whether or not you are “South Asian” enough (or however you may identify) simply limits your time to that of rumination.

Society imposes its policies of governance upon our bodies, but it holds no seed. The fruits of its evil cannot grow on our soil if we choose to resist.

My guide to feeling comfortable in your own skin? Well, that is simple. Just own it. Know your worth. Tale as old as time, right? Maybe it seems like a stupid outcome, an incomplete ending, but if there is anything you may take from this research, it is this: if you have a heart and a brain and blood pumping through your veins, that is scientific proof that you are whole enough. That *you* are enough.

“Your mother wouldn’t approve of how my mother raised me,

But I do, I finally do.”

- *Your Best American Girl* by Mitski

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Appendix

Fig. 1

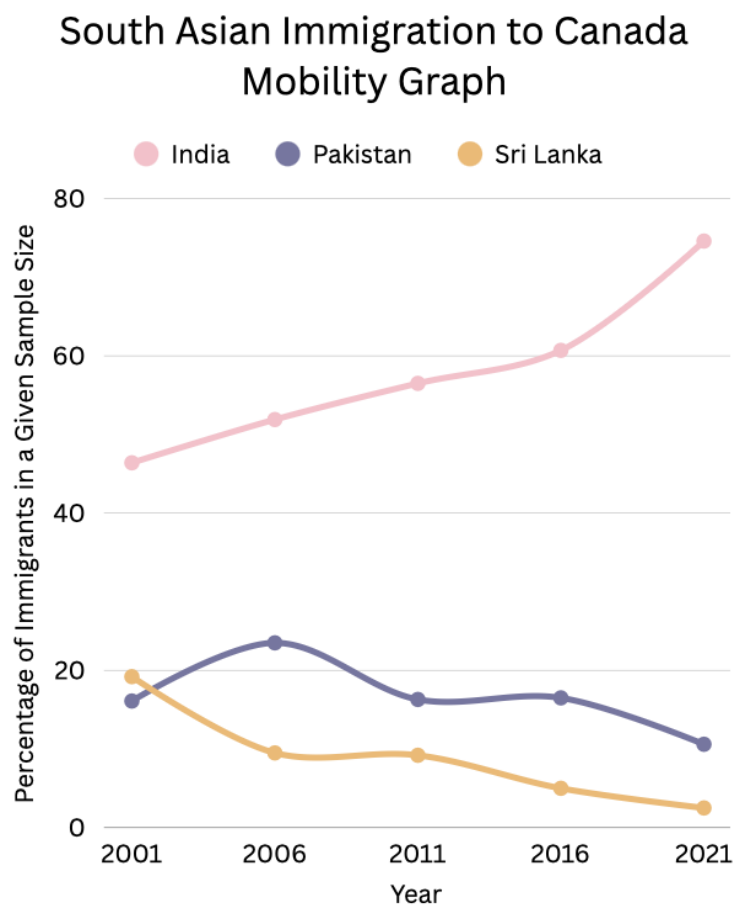
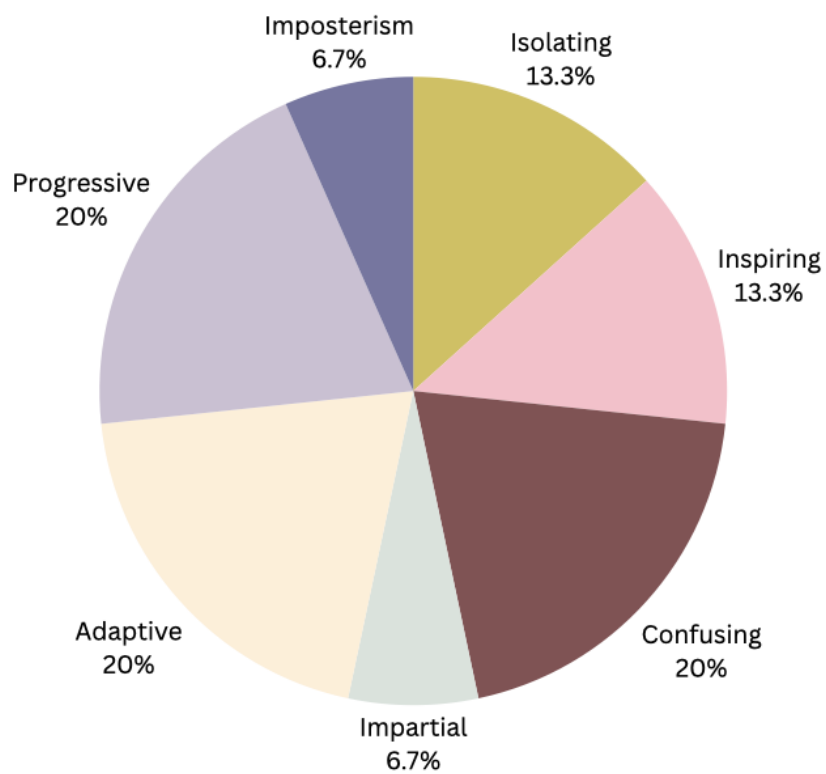


Fig. 2

Three Words to Describe Growing Up as a Biracial South Asian



Resources for BIPOC Individuals

- Anishnawbe Health Toronto Mental Health Crisis Line — (416) 360-0486
- Across Boundaries — (416) 787-3007
- Blackline — 1 (800) 604-5841
- Caribbean African Canadian Social Services — (416) 740-1056
- HF Care — (416) 493-4242
- NAN Hope — 1 (844) 626-4673
- South Asian Women's Centre — (226) 778-9121
- South Asian Canadians Health and Social Services — (647) 367-4452 or (416) 863-0511
- Talk4Healing — 1 (855) 554-4325

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