

**Raising Canadian-stanis:
Parenting in Muslim Pakistani Communities in Canada**

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Abstract

In this paper, the intersectionality approach is used to understand how being a Muslim Pakistani immigrant affects being a parent. I look into how parents want to pass down their religious and cultural beliefs, such as family honour, and how those beliefs shape their children who are conflicted between two cultures. Beliefs on marriage and dating are also vastly different for Pakistani immigrant parents from those who are part of the dominant culture in Canada. I look into how marriage practices from back home are attempted to be brought over to Canada and how finding a partner can cause conflict between immigrant parents and their children. I also look into how sex and sexuality can cause conflict between parents and their children due to traditional beliefs and religious views. Finally, I look at how issues such as racism and discrimination can affect how Pakistani immigrants parent their children.

Keywords: Pakistani, parenting, Canada, religion, sexuality, marriage

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Introduction

When inquiring about parenting, one of the questions that should be asked is if race and ethnicity affect the ways people parent. In this paper, I use the intersectionality approach to address parenting in South Asian Muslim communities in Canada. Intersectionality asserts that in order to truly understand an individual and their experiences, we need to understand their unique and intersecting social identities. Essentially, intersectionality is how different people have different experiences that shape who we are and how we live our lives. The goal of this paper is to seek to understand how being Muslim Pakistani effects being a parent. Much of the knowledge of the culture and religion comes from my own experiences as being the daughter of two Pakistani parents. My experiences growing up and being raised by my immigrant parents are vastly different from those who have parents that are born and raised in Canada. My focus in this paper will be on Pakistani Muslims who have migrated to Canada. Parenting styles of those who have migrated from other countries, such as Pakistan, are different from those who have been born and raised here. They bring their traditional beliefs and attitudes from home and try to put them into place with their own children. In order to conform to a new country, immigrants are obliged to readjust their way of life. Their children become bicultural children, who are planted in between two different cultures. Immigrant parents are obliged to pass down their religious and cultural beliefs, such as family honour, and those beliefs then go on to shape their children who are become conflicted between two cultures. Conflict between parents and their children can result when traditional values and beliefs clash with the culture of their host country. Beliefs on marriage and dating are also vastly different for Pakistani immigrant parents from those who are part of the dominant culture in Canada. Parents raise their children with their own ideas surrounding marriage practices and finding a partner which can cause conflict between them and their children. Traditional and religious views on sex and sexuality can likewise cause conflict between parents and their children due to external socialization. Immigrant parents also face issues such as racism which subsequently affect how they raise their children. All of these aspects explain how Pakistani Muslim immigrants parent differently than the traditional view of parenting seen in the dominant culture of Canada. My hypothesis is that being Pakistani, being an immigrant and being a Muslim intersects with being a parent and therefore these different social identities have a significant influence on the way individuals raise their children.

Literature Review

As Zaidi, Couture-Carron, Maticka-Tyndale, and Arif (2014) state, “The migration of South Asians from one country to another is becoming increasingly common. This movement comes with post migratory challenges that extend to second-generation South Asians who have to negotiate socialization into two often conflicting sets of values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices: those within and those outside the home” (p. 27). A commonality in all the literature I researched is that immigrants undergo a significant amount of pressure and strain when they enter a new country (Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). One of the strains that emerge from moving to a new country is a struggle between parents and children due to conflicting beliefs and attitudes. An immigrant parent’s greatest fear is for their children to become “Westernized beyond recognition”

(Wakil et al., 1981, p. 939). Children of immigrants feel the pressure of trying to assimilate into the culture around them while their parents struggle with trying to retain their cultural identity (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 938). “Exposure of Pakistani children to the different internal and external (i.e. peer groups, educational institutions, mass media) influences stemming from the host society and from their parental cultural background generates much conflict and modifications in the structure of the Pakistani Muslim immigrant family” (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002, p. 495). Research on LGBTQ+ Muslims and disabled Muslims is definitely lacking.

Another overarching theme found in my research is the importance of family and respecting the elders in one’s family. Wakil et al. (1981) argue that characteristics that almost all Pakistani families share are strong kinship ties, interdependence and great respect for age and authority (p. 930). These are characteristics I see in my own Pakistani family and in the Pakistani community around me. It is essential in any Pakistani family to stick together as one unit and rely on each other when in need. These overarching themes that I have seen in my research prove that maintaining culture, religion, and strong familial ties are exactly what informs and motivates Pakistani parenting styles.

Culture and Religion

Language

Preserving cultural and religious identity is an extremely important aspect of parenting for South Asian Muslim families. As Wakil et al. state, “exposure of children to different influences from host society causes tension” (1981, p. 929). Immigrant parents are extremely anxious about losing their culture and traditions as the generations continue and it is of utmost importance for them to make sure they are continued to be passed down from generation to generation. The primary focus for immigrant parents is the adoption of Canadian ways, but also the retention of their own values (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 929). Language, in particular, is an important aspect of culture to look at. Language is the one piece of home that immigrants can hang on to and is something that allows them to feel a sense of community with others who share their language. This is why it is very important for immigrant parents to pass down the language. Interestingly, research has found that children who understood their language would respond back to their parents in English when their parents spoke to them in their mother tongue (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 937). “[M]inority language usage can be characterised as strengthening exclusive identities and homogeneous groups” (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009, p. 189). In many cases for children of immigrant parents, they have to understand and speak their native language because their parents or other family members may not understand English. Many individuals, especially women, poor communities in Pakistan and India do not have access to a good education. This can then lead to a higher number of immigrant parents, especially mothers, who do not know how to speak, read, or write in English. This is why it is crucial for the children to speak and understand the language so that they are able to communicate with their parents and other family members. However, it is still important for the children of immigrants to be proficient in English if they want to be educated and work in Canada. “Proficiency in the language of the receiving country has also been conceptualised as a form of human capital, one that promotes economic opportunities and the chance to become part of the dominant social structure” (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009, p. 188).

One thing I have noticed in regards to language is that there is a communication gap between immigrant grandparents and their grandchildren. In a second-generation marriage, English is mostly used in the household, regardless if one or both of the parents are fluent in their mother tongue. This reason, combined with increasing interracial marriage, leads to third-generation children losing their language. There could possibly be a complete loss of language if their parents are not diligent with teaching them.

Family Honour

What is particularly important is the idea of family honour or *izzat*. (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 937). The reputation of the family is of extreme importance and one should do everything they can to keep their family name honourable. “Second-generation South Asians living in Canada are typically socialized according to these traditional norms and expectations within the home...To violate norms...is to violate the family, and pose a threat to each family member as well as to the welfare of the family as a unit” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). This can then cause tension between parents and children. “Living as a bicultural individual can exert considerable strain and pressure, especially when making personal life choices and decisions, with these stresses greatest for South Asian women” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). Respect of elders is especially important for Pakistanis, both back home and living abroad. Disrespecting one’s elders is seen as a form of slandering one’s family reputation, which is one of the worst things one can do in a Pakistani household. “Following the collectivistic nature of many South Asian cultures, family members are expected to consider the needs, position, and honour of their family over their own needs or desires” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). Wakil et al. (1981) state that parents can often use a traditional pattern of beliefs to determine how appropriate their children’s behaviour is. This causes confusion and tension for the children who are living between two cultures. They start to question how valid certain values are and feel offended by the idea of being judged based on values they barely know (p. 939).

Gender Roles

Traditional Pakistani gender roles also shape the way immigrant parents parent their children. Girls and boys are raised differently in Pakistani communities and those norms are often transferred over to second-generation children. “Religion, family, and community structures reinforce and police these norms” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). These traditional gender roles are similar to gender roles that have been seen in Canada in the past and some that we still have today. “Historically and traditionally girls were kept in the home and raised to be nurturing, responsible, and obedient women. The domain of boys was outside the home where they learned to achieve and be self-reliant, becoming the breadwinners of the family” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 31). Different roles are placed for girls than boys and girls are much more heavily monitored than boys. Girls are taught to be nurturing, dutiful and modest. Wakil et al. (1981) found that of the families they investigated, one-third of wives worked and that the primary occupation of two-thirds was the traditional housewife even though they all had formal education (p. 932). Girls are often not let out of the house on their own for things like going out with friends or extracurricular activities. In many traditional families, girls are taught to stay at home and take care of the family so that one day they may be a good wife and mother. Girls are taught to stay at home so that they cannot be

led astray and their image may not be tarnished. As Zaidi et al. (2014) explain, “[W]omen are more stringently controlled than men because, it is argued, family honour is more directly linked to a girl’s behaviour” (p.31). As explained above, family honour or *izzat* is extremely important to Indo-Pakistani families. If an individual goes against any of the traditional norms set in place, they put their entire family honour at risk. As stated above, to violate norms is to violate and threaten the entire family (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). Boys are raised to be more independent and are able to go out with friends and be involved in extracurricular activities. “Not only are different roles and skills stressed for girls and boys, but parents are also “more indulgent to boys and often overlook their breaking of social norms, [food] taboos, dress codes, dating and drinking” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 31). Boys are not heavily controlled because they are seen as more independent and strong. They are seen as individuals who will one day be the head of their household and carry on the family legacy, therefore they should be able to go out and experience the world. Studies have found that Muslim families tend to continue having children until they have a son. The same study showed that the same tendency seemed to disappear among second-generation immigrants (Almond, Edlund, & Milligan, 2013, p.92). Sons are considered important to have in the family because they are seen as the ones who will be the provider for their family and uphold their family honour. Women’s actions, as discussed above, are accountable for family honour which is why they must be much more monitored than men (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 31). These gender roles are more strictly enforced in more traditional families and these attitudes are changing over time. Research has shown that Muslims who identify as conservatively religious tend to believe in more traditional gender roles than Muslims who identify as less conservatively religious (Ali-Faisal, 2018, pp. 182-183). Wakil et al, argue that there is an increasing number of immigrant parents who encourage their daughters to get a higher education and pursue their careers (1981, p. 934). These types of gender norms, at least for women, are starting to decrease within Pakistani families who have immigrated into Western society.

Religion

As for religion, “Islam is a total, all-embracing way of life for some Muslims, one that unifies metaphysical and materialistic dimensions. It includes both specific religious rituals and prayers, communicated through the words and commands of the prophet Mohammed and through the teachings of subsequent religious leaders” (Graham, Bradshaw & Trew, 2010, p. 339). Muslim parents are persistent about making sure their children understand and follow their religion is because they are worried about their children losing it completely and therefore it not being passed down from generation to generation. Studies have proven that among South Asian Muslim immigrants, religion is a strong influence in the lives of the first-generation (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 33). Islam is a very clearly structured religion that produces and enforces norms for Muslims to follow.

Muslim parents teach their children the five pillars of Islam including, fasting during Ramadan, reading the Quran and how to pray *salah* or *namaz*, starting at a young age and it is up to the individual to carry on and practice in their own way. “While group belonging, whether religious or cultural, was quite important to the majority, it was always based on individual choice” (Ramji & Beyer, 2013). For many Muslim children, Islam is truly pivotal to their lives and greatly influences who they are. Like any other religion, there is a range between moderately practicing

and very religious. The authors of the book *Growing Up Canadian*, categorize individuals based on how practicing they are in order to understand this better. The first group is categorized as highly involved. “They adhered to a rather consistent standard of Muslim orthodoxy that locates the five pillars of confession, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage at the very centre of what it means to be a Muslim and that emphasizes restricted sexual behaviour, endogamy, dietary restrictions, and a moral emphasis on peace, tolerance, justice, caring for others, and a compassionate social order” (Ramji & Beyer, 2013). The second category is moderately practicing which “...[I]ncluded everyone from those who aspired to highly involved status and “tried their best” in the meantime to those who did little more than identify as Muslims and engaged, if only occasionally, in specific religious practises such as prayer or fasting during Ramadan” (Ramji & Beyer, 2013). Finally, the third category is the individuals who are not religious and rejected Islam altogether. The authors found that among 93 of their Muslim interviewees, less than half fell into the highly involved category (Ramji & Beyer, 2013). The authors also assert that “The way these highly involved Muslims came to their vision of what constituted this ideal Islam was highly individualistic, not in the sense that they would decide whatever they wanted but rather in the sense that the search for authentic Islam was in most cases ongoing and derived from a variety of sources that they accessed individually and directly” (Ramji & Beyer, 2013).

Many children of Muslim immigrants are conflicted with following Islam and trying to live in a Westernized society, therefore they reconstruct their own views on the religion. As Ramji and Beyer (2013) assert from their findings, “The vast majority...insisted that their strong identity as Muslims should in no way hinder them from full participation in the surrounding society, whether this meant socially, culturally, politically, or in terms of profession.” For example, eating strictly halal meats can be a decision many children of immigrant parents struggle with. In Pakistan, the only option you have is halal food, therefore, there are not any temptations to try other foods. In countries such as Canada, while there are halal options, there are many other restaurants that do not serve halal meat. This can create a conflict within the bicultural individual since they do not have as many options as their peers. In my experience, almost every Muslim will refrain from eating pork, even if they do not strictly eat halal meat.

Another problem can come from praying *salah* or *namaz*. Praying five times a day is one of the five pillars of Islam. The issue here is that school and work in host countries take up most of the day and there are not many times where one can take a break to go pray, as they can back home. This restriction can cause conflicts between wanting to fulfill religious commitments and wanting to fulfill school and work commitments. Compromises can be made to fit in praying *salah* or *namaz* into a Canadian lifestyle, such as only praying the evening prayers after work or school, or praying on Friday which is a holy day. Recently, I have noticed many multi-faith rooms have now been added into schools to allow a space for students to pray. This will hopefully allow some more room for people to be able to fulfill religious commitments if they choose to. All of this leads to a reconstruction of what Islam and being a practicing Muslim means to second-generation Muslims. This can cause conflict for immigrant parents who wish for their children to be more practicing Muslims in order to carry on the religion, however, compromises can be made in order to be a practicing Muslim and live a Canadian lifestyle.

Marriage and Sexuality

Mate Selection, Marriage and Dating

Marriage and dating are a completely different experience for children of South Asian Muslim parents. Dating is not seen as ideal for many Pakistani Muslim parents. Wakil et al. (1981) found that almost all the families in their sample viewed dating and romantic love with great dismay (p. 939). For their children, however, dating is seen as a normative part of growing up that helps them learn about their own sexuality and the feelings that come with it (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 29). “Through social interaction with the western culture and society, Pakistani Muslims, specifically the second generation, are exposed to new ideas, symbols, and meanings with regards to love and marriage. This modern ideology places the Pakistani family under attack and causes a difference of opinion between Pakistani parents and their children. These youngsters are placing more of an emphasis on western values like love before marriage” (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002, p. 508). Most parents believe forbidding dating can help prevent premarital sex and therefore, preserve family honour. At times, many second-generation children feel they need to hide their relationships from their parents because they can not be dating simply to date as their peers do. They must either refrain from dating or solely be dating in order to pursue marriage. Arranged marriages are seen as the ideal way to find their children partners for most Pakistani parents.

There are three types of marriages that I personally have seen occur within Indian and Pakistani communities; arranged marriages, semi-arranged marriages and love marriages. Arranged marriages are most popular in Pakistan and it is highly likely for immigrant parents to have had arranged marriages themselves. “This marriage is defined as a contractual agreement, written or unwritten, between two families, rather than individuals...The individual's interests, needs, and happiness are considered secondary to the interests of the family and community. This type of marriage helps maintain social tradition, by allowing one to fulfill religious, as well as social obligations towards the family, community, and society” (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002, p. 495).

Marriages, where the individual chooses their own partner, are commonly referred to as love marriages in Pakistan. Love marriages are uncommon in Pakistan because they were disapproved of. “Because a love marriage presumes one to be engaged in a relationship prior to marriage, it may, by definition be perceived as a threat to family honor, associated with chastity, and hence may be less valued by family members, the community, and society” (Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002, p. 496). Nevertheless, love marriages still occurred in the past and are becoming more and more common today. For Pakistanis, mate selection is mainly done by trusted family members or close friends of the family because arranged marriages are perceived to be the more legitimate option. “Although not typically realized, the ideal in most traditional South Asian families in the heritage and host countries is the segregation of men and women outside the family with cross-gender intimate relationships forbidden prior to an official engagement and/or marriage. This segregation is thought to preserve premarital virginity, which is crucial to a family's honour and reputation” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30).

Many Pakistani parents believe that marriage can aid in upward mobility if one marries above their social class. Falling in love is not considered in the decision-making process. In fact, it is just expected to just happen after marriage. Most arranged marriages are endogamous. The

decision-making is done solely by the family to ensure the marriage is successful and that it will not end in divorce. This is also why endogamy is so popular. In very traditional families, many parents marry within the family, to first or second cousins. This is to ensure family status and reputation stays the same, that the marriage is successful and does not end in divorce, and to strengthen familial bonds. In this traditional setting, the bride does not really have a say in decision making, but the groom can decline an offer. Arranged marriages still happen among individuals who are born and raised in Canada. Potential spouses can be found within Pakistani communities in Canada or found in Pakistan. They are introduced to each other through photos and once they begin to like each other, the elders of their family will begin to take the steps needed to secure the marriage. The families may decide to visit each other if they live far apart and if they live in the same city, more liberal families will allow the couple to meet for an actual date (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 936). Research shows that many Canadian born children are not as accepting of the idea of an arranged marriage. Canadian born children are not willing to accept the idea of love after marriage and would prefer their partners to have grown up in Western culture as they have themselves (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 937).

I asked my own parents to discuss their own arranged marriage with me. My mother explained her experience as a bride to me. "As the girl, you had to do what your parents told you because they want what is best for you" (Khan S., Personal Communication, November 2, 2019). In this case, the individual is not looked at in decision making but the family. I asked my father about his side of his experience and he explained, "I was just shown a picture of her and I asked my mother if she approved because she was the one who met her. She said yes, so I said yes" (Khan R., Personal Communication, November 2, 2019). Family and family reputation is placed high above the individual in this type of marriage.

Semi-arranged marriages are a bit more lenient when it comes to the couple getting to know each other. Family or family friends still choose potential matches, however, the man and woman have more opportunities to meet, go on dates and talk before marriage to get to know each other well enough to make a decision. There is no pressure for this match to end in actual marriage, but if they do choose to proceed with the marriage, the potential groom would have to reach out to his family so that they can officially send a proposal or *rishta* to the bride's family. In this case, the family is still very much central in decision-making but gives the individual more freedom to choose as well. In this case, love before marriage is actually crucial to decision making. This type of marriage is gaining popularity in Pakistan and India but also with immigrant families living abroad.

Love marriages are complicated in Pakistani societies. They are very rare but are becoming slightly more popular, especially with second-generation Pakistanis living in Canada. While family consent is still very much required, I have found that Pakistani families living in Western society are generally more accepting and it is easier for someone to get married to the person they choose if they were born in Canada. Modern technology is a great source for helping young Muslim people find a partner to marry. Apps such as *Minder* or *Muzmatch* are dating apps that allow Muslims from around the world to find matches. This helps people who want to stay in endogamous relationships or try to marry outside of one's class, race or ethnicity. Most importantly, these apps help young Muslims find a life partner on their own. Whether one finds someone through apps like this or in real life, family consent is still very important. "The power of the family, in

particular, in the arena of sexuality and cross-gender relationships is exerted not only through the external mechanisms of chaperonage and surveillance, but also through the internal ties of loyalty and care for the family and its members” (Zaidi et al., 2014, p. 30). Love marriages can follow similar steps as a semi-arranged marriage. The man would have to go to his family and explain that he has found someone he wants to marry and if they approve, then they can send an official proposal to the woman’s family. If the family disapproves and the couple proceeds to get married, it is considered to be a great dishonour to the family. One of the biggest reasons Pakistani families would disapprove of a union is exogamy. This could either be outside of family class, race or even Islamic sect. Because endogamy is so ingrained in older generations, it is harder for them to accept exogamy.

Interracial marriage is not very prevalent in Pakistan because there is not much multiculturalism there. In multicultural societies like Canada, it is more definitely more common but usually not accepted by Pakistani families. Some more liberal families, however, will accept an interracial couple if both people in the couple are Muslim. Interreligious marriages are usually not accepted because some families may worry about the loss of religion. Studies have found that religious intermarriage is increasing and second-generation children are more likely to be in interfaith marriages (Lee, Edmonston, Hou, & Wu, 2017, p. 671). This can definitely cause conflict between parents and their children. It is believed that marrying someone non-Muslim can cause dishonour to the family, especially if done by a female in the family. “Clearly a racial-ethnic outmarriage by a female will be a serious blow to the family on there not just by the fact of such a marriage alone but also indicative of the fact that the parental issues and authority were violated.” (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 937). Same-sex marriage is forbidden according to the Quran and therefore, is generally not accepted by Pakistanis. Finally, there are also gender roles that come with marriage in Pakistani families. The woman is always expected to live with her parents until she is married. Once she is married there is an entire ceremony called the *rukhsati* that symbolizes her leaving her home to go into her husband’s home. In Pakistan, many women get married fairly young. This is changing both there and with second-generation children as education is becoming a higher priority. From my own observations, I have noticed that if immigrant children do get married at a younger age it is because they either have not decided to get post-secondary education or to make their own relationship *halal* to please their parents.

Sex and Sexuality

The topic of sex and sexuality is considered very taboo in Muslim Pakistani households. Many parents refrain from talking about anything to do with sex with their children because it is thought to be inappropriate. “Although many parents, including Muslim parents, are unwilling to openly and directly communicate with their children regarding sexual issues they are transmitting their sexual attitudes through cultural teachings and observed behaviours” (Ali-Faisal, 2018, p. 182). Even though it is not spoken about at home, Pakistani children learn about sexuality and sexual attitudes through their peers and the institutions around them such as school and the media. Studies have found that “[T]heir status as religious, and often ethnic, minority means they will receive multiple, often contradictory, messages regarding sexual behaviours from their religion, cultural background, and mainstream North American culture, resulting in the experience of

unique sexual health challenges” (Ali-Faisal, 2018, pp. 181). Ali-Faisal (2018) explains that these mixed messages can often lead to challenges such as sexual guilt and sexual anxiety. She defines sexual guilt as “a type of self-imposed punishment one assigns for either violating or anticipating the violation of one’s own standards of proper sexual conduct.” Sexual anxiety is a “general expectation for nonspecific punishment from others for violating, or anticipating violating, perceived societal standards of appropriate sexual behaviour” (p. 181) As stated before, religion creates and enforces specific cultural norms. Premarital sex is seen as something that is seen as *haram*, which is something that is prohibited in the Quran. In order to make sexual relations halal, or religiously accepted, is to be married. These attitudes influence dating and sexuality, especially for second-generation children who receive conflicting views on sexuality. “Any deviation from religious norms can produce guilt and shame” (Zaidi et al., 2014, pp. 33). For women, one is often told to repress their sexual desires until they are married. As discussed above, women’s actions are directly linked to family honour. Zaidi et al. (2014) assert that “[T]here are consequences for women who shame their family by having premarital relationships, such as poor arranged marriage prospects for the women and their family members, increased parental control, accelerated arranged marriages, and being ostracized“ (p. 48). When women are finally married, they are then told they must be there to please their husbands. This leads to a lot of confusion around sex for many young women. When it comes to sexual activities, there is definitely a double standard. Ali-Faisal (2018) found “interviews with Muslim mothers and their young daughters demonstrated that the mothers believed that unmarried women were not to know about sex, whereas unmarried men were expected to be sexually knowledgeable“ (p. 182). This explains the double standards that are formed though gender norms as discussed above. Premarital sex is forbidden for both men and women, but parents are definitely more lenient with their sons than they are with their daughters. “Being raised as a son or daughter is likely to result in different approaches to understanding and experiencing cross-gender relationships and sexual activity” (Zaidi et al. 2014, p. 31). Men have much more agency in their lives, therefore they are more likely to go against the norms and engage in sexual activity before marriage. “Research has established that gender, ethnicity, and religious commitment all influence the initiation, shape, and form of intimate relationships among Canadian youth” (Zaidi et al. 2014, p. 33). Engaging in sexual acts also depends on how religious the person is, regardless of gender. “The data also shows that, for these participants, different levels of religiousness influence behaviours and perceptions of intimate cross-gender relationships with lower levels of religiousness being predominantly associated with greater approval of and experiences with intimate cross-gender relationships” (Zaidi et al. 2014, p. 48). There is also an intolerance for any LGBTQ+ relationships in most Muslim Pakistani societies because homosexuality is also considered *haram*. Many LGBTQ+ individuals in Pakistani communities must hide who they truly are in order to refrain from being shunned by their families. Some may even end up marrying someone they do not want to, simply to please their parents. Obviously, these marriages do not end well. More research is definitely needed in this area.

Issues

Finally, I want to address issues that are faced by immigrant parents who raise their bicultural children. Wakil et al. (1981) found that there is “a "cultural" generation gap, over the

competing value systems” between most immigrant parents and their children (p. 939). There is often a barrier between immigrant parents and their children because they have led very different lives. As we have seen above, many of the values that immigrant parents attempt to teach their children can conflict with the lives of their children. Differing ideas surrounding religion, education, marriage, sexuality and dating can often lead to a strain in relationships. “Living as a bicultural individual can exert considerable strain and pressure, especially when making personal life choices and decisions, with these stresses greatest for South Asian women” (Zaidi et al. 2014, p. 31). As Zaidi explains, these stresses can be greater for daughters of immigrant parents because they are more strictly controlled than sons.

Both parents and children oftentimes face racism in their lives. They can be subjected to things such as job discrimination and hate crime simply because they are othered by the dominant culture. “Indeed, children of immigrants must deal with their racial status, that is, their physical characteristics or skin colour that may hinder their pursuit of upward mobility” (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009, p. 190). This hindrance of upward mobility can also make it difficult for new immigrants to establish themselves in their careers when they first arrive in their host country. This means they often have to work long hours in order to provide for their families. This can create a disconnect between parents and their children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parenting as a Pakistani Muslim is much different than parenting in the heteronormative idea of parenthood. Being a parent is intersected with being an immigrant, being South Asian, and being Muslim among many other aspects of one’s identity. It is hoped that with this paper I can shed some light on how immigrant parents adjust their way of life to fit into their new surroundings while also attempting to uphold their own cultural and religious traditions. Muslim Pakistani immigrant parents feel obligated to teach their children their language and religion so that it does not get lost in the generations to come. Their views on marriage, dating and sexuality also differ from traditional parenting and often will create confusion for their children who are presented with different attitudes from the dominant culture of the host society. It is also hoped that through this paper, some light is shed on the issues faced by immigrant parents such as racism and disconnect from their own children. Future research should be directed towards sexual health, modern mate selection for second-generation children, LGBTQ+ Muslims, and disabled Muslims. Future research should also be directed toward immigrant grandparenting and second-generation parenting. It is hoped that I am able to add to the literature about Pakistani Muslims living in North America by sharing my own experiences as being raised in Canada as a child of two Muslim Pakistani parents.

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