

Identity - Who Am I?

What is identity?



Determining one's identity is a dynamic process and honestly a life long journey.

We may associate our identities with the ethnoracial history of our parents, the countries we live in, the languages we speak, the cultures we celebrate, the faith we practice and any combination of some or all of the factors mentioned and even more that haven't been mentioned.



As a result, **trying to figure out who you are is not an easy exercise**, especially when trying to honour your ethnoracial background or your roots with your current living situation.

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1st, 1.5, and 2nd Generations' Experiences



For individuals residing in Canada or in a place that they wouldn't refer to as their home according to their roots, **there's a process of identity formation that occurs which can be challenging.**

We often see these differences between 1st, 1.5 and the 2nd generation immigrants.²

The older generation has strong ties to their homeland, culture, faith, language, people and traditions which have been strongly formed in their development.³

However **for the 1.5 or 2nd generation, these links to their roots are experienced through their parents, the elders in their respective communities and others who serve to share that dialogue with them.**⁴

They are also residing in a new space in which they develop relationships, understand the social norms and expectations of people, and try to determine what they need to do to live a successful and fulfilling life.⁵

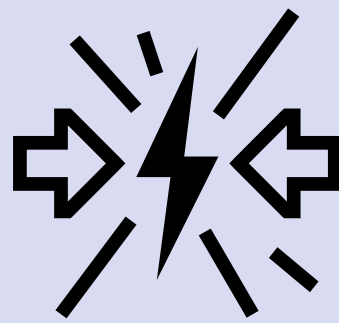
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Generational Conflict



Given these different upbringings and having to navigate so many identities, **culture clash can occur between the generations based on different worldviews, ideas, thoughts, and behaviours.**⁶



As children and youth understand their roots and cultures through their parents, they are both also navigating their spaces and roles in the host country their family has settled in.⁷



Oftentimes, clashes between individualistic and collective cultures **can make individuals feel as if their needs are not being respected and they are not getting the right supports** to work towards a comfortable and fulfilling life.⁸

6-8. Anandakugan, 2021; Burgio, 2016; Eliatamby, 2012; Shanmugandapala, 2020;

Hybrid Identities



Hybrid identities involve the transnational migrants who “are **constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference**”.⁹

Hybrid identities emphasize the fact that “each individual is not a representative of a “culture” but is the **result of [their] specific life story**”.¹⁰

Canadianness



Canadianness is the general adherence to perceived sociocultural ideologies and behaviours to be associated with Canada.¹¹

In an attempt to fit into the country, all individuals engage in a process of experiencing Canadianness to fit in and align themselves with the expectations set out for them.¹²

Applied to the Tamil-Canadian population, but true for immigrants of any background, families that migrate to Canada lose their accustomed ways of life which results in “loss of traditional social support systems, leadership, rituals, belief systems and practices”.¹³

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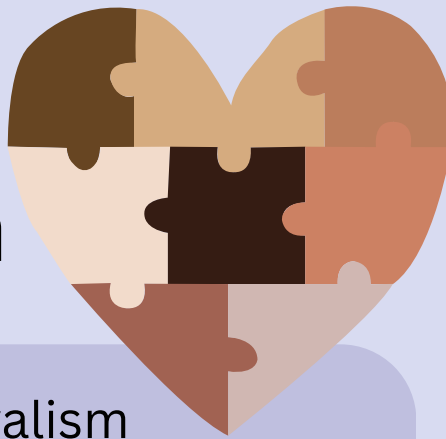
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9-10. Burgio, 2016, p.119-120

11-13. Shanmuganandapala, 2020, p. 181

The Issue with Multiculturalism



However, what the multiculturalism framework of Canada does is **it can sometimes hide or erase the rich different ethnoracial and cultural differences that people possess** in an attempt to make them more **uniform and homogenous**.



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So, what hybrid identities do to Canadianness, is that they highlight the notion of acculturation and demonstrate that **one does not have to sacrifice their true selves to belong to Canada.**¹⁴

This bring awareness to identity from a two-pole to a three-pole connection, wherein **individuals are negotiating their identity on the basis of their country of origin, their host country, and the diasporic community they belong to.**¹⁵



14. Sriskandarajah, 2014

15. Burgio, 2016

So Who Am I?



This is both a simple and complex question.
You are everything that makes you, you.

The people around you, the spaces you access, the ideas, thoughts, and behaviours you engage in **all fit together** to make a unique puzzle.



You may have shared aspects of your identity with others which allows you to experience an increased level of understanding around some collective experiences, or you may have nothing in common with someone and learn more about yourself and them by engaging in dialogue.

Therefore, **whether you strongly identify with your roots, a mix of identities, or feel that being Canadian is your true identity, continue to celebrate your identity,** know that it is constantly developing, and approach others knowing that they're on a similar journey or determining who they are.

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Questions to Explore

Who am I?

Who would I be if I had no limitations.

What is my origin story?

What space do I feel the most comfortable in?

What person or group do I feel the most connected with?

Who would I like to become?

What do I know about myself?

What don't I know about myself?



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