

Second Generation Korean Canadian Female Youth (SGKCFY): An Exploration of the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in the Successful Psychosocial Integration into Multicultural Societies (A Literature Review-January 2009)

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Objectives

The purpose of this literature review is to discuss the processes by which second generation Korean Canadian female youth (SGKCFY) psychosocially integrate into multicultural societies. Current literature problematizes second generation female youth and their level of integration (i.e. Berry et al., 2006) but no literature discusses how SGKCFY advance in their development to offset the risk factors that accompanying integration. My thoughts about this lack of literature leads me to the following questions:

- What are the processes inherent in successful psychosocial integration of SGKCFY living in a multicultural society?
 - How do lifestage, gender, ethnicity and race intersect to promote a positive sense of self among SGKCFY living in a multicultural metropolis?

Introduction

Few studies have focused on second generation Korean Canadian female youth (SGKCFY). However, this is a growing group in need of being further investigated as they pursue a life in a multicultural society, such as Canada. Current academic research is only inclusive of older female adolescents, young female adults and women with respect to integration into multicultural societies (e.g. Kim & Grant, 1997; Smith & Schneider, 2000; Wong & Tsang, 2004). However, very little is known about the formative years for young

female adolescents. Through this thesis, I plan to explore experiences of SGKCFY and their exposure to various factors, such as intergenerational complexities, interethnic factors and gender inequalities that affect their level of psychosocial integration into multicultural societies such as Canada. The literature review will point toward the multi-contextual influences (societal, relational, individual) that SGKCFY face as they grow up in Canada. I will briefly discuss acculturation and its relationship with youth. The definition of youth will encompass the age range from 12-18 years of age, for the purposes of this examination. I will discuss the multicultural and interethnic experiences, such as the degree of out-group attitudes, related to second generation youth. I will then discuss the lack of agreement in the literature in relation to adolescent women and psychosocial integration into multicultural settings.

Acculturation and Youth

Youth who enter into a new environment will ultimately alter themselves in order to adapt to the new surroundings. This is known as acculturation (Berry et al, 2006; Ryder et al, 2000). Acculturation affects several domains of a person's being: from the societal domain, where the youth alter their physical appearance in order to look similar to their peers, all the way to the individual domain, where changes may be seen in their own self-concept. Acculturation differences can also be observed within generation and genders. For instance, Berry and colleagues (2006), in their examination of acculturation of ~ 8000 national and immigrant youth from 26 different cultural backgrounds and living in 13 different countries, found differences in adaptation (psychological and sociocultural) between the males and females in all youth groups. Psychological adaptation refers to "personal well-being and mental health" (p. 306) and sociocultural adaptation refers to the youth's ability to be knowledgeable in the host society's norms. Females were more likely to not adapt as well as males psychologically but did adapt

well socioculturally. This would indicate that female youth may experience difficulties on an individual level to adapt to Canada but would educate themselves more fully regarding the multicultural society in order to fit in. The variations seen in adaptation and integration into the multicultural society support the dynamic nature of youth and their degree of psychosocial integration (Khanlou, 2008). The level of social integration into the larger society, the formation of a cultural identity in a multicultural society describes some of the areas that require further exploration and research.

In line with Berry's (2006) findings, Neto (2002) also found, in his study of 109 male and female second generation Portugese youth living in France between the ages of 15-18 years old, they faced these same challenges in adapting to the host society. The defining factor that separated youth who successfully adapted and those who did not adapt well was the level to which each individual identified with the host society. Immigrant youth who lived in France longer were more likely to have positive affiliations with the host country and thus, able to socially adapt. Neto (2002) also noted that the key to being able to successfully socioculturally adapt was related to how well a person psychologically adapted, which was not discussed in Berry's (2006) findings. One may argue that the correlation between the two modes of adaptation and the link may just be by chance. The distinction between males and females who were integrating into the French culture were not detected within this study. The defining differences between those who were well integrated and those who were not correlated more to their perceptions of ethnic identity. Examining studies of other second-generation immigrant youth groups, however, were insightful. Lalonde and Giguere (2008) concluded, from a recent set of studies examining second generation South Asian Canadians, second generation Chinese Canadians, that some of the second generation youth of ethnic background in the study still had

difficulties in both psychologically adapting and thus this affected their abilities to socioculturally adapt into Canadian society. The challenges that the youth faced were in light of their simultaneous exposure to conflicting values from both their own ethnic background and that of the host society. This places youth in a serious predicament, especially when they perceived that they were going to be at odds with their own ethnic values, further impacting their own sense of self-worth and self-esteem. There were no discussions around the differences between male and female views of adapting into Canadian society, which would need to be further explored in further research. The differences in adaptation have been established by Berry (2006), yet, there have not been studies to indicate these differences between various second generation ethnic groups.

Intergenerational Challenges

The effort to preserve one's original ethnic culture and at the same to acculturate into host society still continues is experienced by immigrant groups and their children. There is an uncertainty that parents have with the values of the host society, especially when they clash with those of the ethnic values that they have taught their children. The parents have not had as many multicultural experiences compared to their children and the opportunities to trust were so few. For example, Portes (1997) discussed the ethnic enclaves developing within the immigrant groups in the U.S. This allowed immigrants to engage with others of the same ethnic background with little need to interact or engage with other groups in the larger society (Portes, 1997). However, their children have had these experiences and were therefore more trusting to integrate into the host society as compared to their parents (dissonant acculturation) (Phinney et al, 2000).

In cultures where the nuclear family and collectivistic ideals are of high importance, parents may find that raising their children in host societies with different value sets becomes challenging (Phinney et al, 2000). This places acculturative stress onto the individual youths also. Intergenerational stress placed on the second generation is distinct along the lines of gender. Kwak & Berry's (2001) study of Asian families determined that the degree to which second generation Korean girls demonstrated conflicts in their value systems was larger with their parents on issues related to gender equality compared to their male counterparts. There are discreet gender differences found in ethnic communities compared to Anglo-European families which may stifle the females in their quest for equal rights as they grow up. This may also cause conflict within the family as the female youth grow up in Canada. When parents were not aligned with the expectation of youth autonomy in Juang, Lerner, McKinney and von Eye's (1999) study, the results confirmed that conflict between the parents and youth would ensue. Using a Goodness of Fit model in order to test their hypothesis, the researchers also found a relationship between the degree of fit and the outcomes for the youth: the poorer the fit, the higher the chances that the youth would experience psychological distress (Juang et al., 1999). Therefore, the risk for conflict between ethnic parents and second generation female youth regarding autonomy and obtaining equal rights in Canada is proving to be more challenging for this group.

Not all studies resulted in challenges for female ethnic youth. Qin (2009) interviewed 72 Chinese immigrant adolescents to understand how they negotiated their ethnic identity in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. She found that the females negotiated their identities quite well in light of the often conflicting values placed onto them both by their family environment and the larger society by rooting their own beliefs in the Chinese culture while still working on integrating

themselves into the school environment (Qin, 2009). Also, Corak (2008) found, in his examination of the second generation visible minority groups in Canada using the Canadian Census statistics, that the second generation was overall doing better comparatively to the first generation in terms of education, opportunities and financial status. Particularly interesting was the lack of a correlation between the parents' educational status and the second generation daughter's educational level. Corak (2008) cautioned that while the pursuit of education was most likely with second generation females, there was also the additional burden placed onto the girls to act as the cultural vessels for subsequent generations. Studies, such as those previously discussed, leaves one questioning whether there are other interpersonal factors at play to augment the current struggles, such as racism and gender discrimination, that these females would otherwise be facing in multicultural societies.

The ethnic values that are exchanged between parents and female youth early on in life may impress upon the youth the preference to regard their own ethnic background highly compared to other ethnic groups (Juang et al., 1999). This is commonly seen in the institution of marriage. The parents' perceived need to preserve the culture by encouraging allocentric marriages has been increasingly documented in the literature (e.g. Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Kwak & Berry, 2001; Lalonde & Giguere, 2008). In a qualitative study of South Asian female youth in Montreal, this group was encouraged by their parents to find husbands of the same ethnic background (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Also, in another study with Korean Canadian groups, parents encouraged their second generation children to integrate into the host society but strongly encouraged seeking out their potential mates within the same ethnic background (Kwak & Berry, 2001). Parents of Chinese parents were also strongly impressing upon their second generation children to find mates who were of the same ethnic background as they were. But,

the children instead varied in their choice of mate (Lalonde & Giguere, 2008). Children who identified with the traditional culture more than the host culture were more likely to choose mates of the same ethnic background, but the opposite was also true. This demonstrates the desire for parents to hold onto their traditions and have them passed onto their children while the children fight for freedom of choice with regard to marriage. This, of course, alters the perceptions that youth have of people in other ethnic groups.

Interethnic Relationships

The pressures from both the ethnic community and the host society have a profound influence on youth and their interactions with their peers. For youth, the most common interactions occur with other friends from either school or the immediate neighborhood. With the increasing amount of diversity in Canada, there are now more opportunities for youth to engage with others who are from different backgrounds. Phinney and colleagues (1997) surveyed 547 adolescent from African-, Latino- and Asian American backgrounds. When ethnic minority youth had positive in-group attitudes, they were also inclined to have positive out-group attitudes. The culmination of these attitudes were based on their own perceived impression of their ethnic group as well as how they perceived other people of different ethnicities to perceive their ethnic group (Phinney et al, 1997). The need to develop this sense of ethnic identity is seen through multicultural interactions with others. This also reinforces the individuals who have positive in-group attributes will also be more positively integrated, both psychologically and socioculturally. The examination did not take into account the gender differences in males and female out-group attitudes. This would need further exploration, in light of the gender differences noted in studies mentioned previously in this paper. In another study, although there was diversity seen among the 79 12-14 year old youth in Toronto schools

and communities, Smith and Schneider (2000) found that there was a tendency for best friends to be of the same ethnic background as the youth who participated in the study. The youth who chose best friends of the same ethnic background provide support for the in-group attitudes and the hierarchical nature of ethnic groups seen even in youth. This result indicates that Asian Canadian youth experience challenges based both on their visible status as well as their ethnic background. One particular point that needs to be brought up here is the concept of the “essential foreigner” (Kibria, 2000). The physical differences that persist in the second generation of Asian groups perpetuate the idea of them being foreign from others in multicultural societies.

Therefore, youth attempt to blend into the multicultural landscape as best they can in order to obtain opportunities in the host society while still attempting to hold onto the cultural portion of their being. This is known as the ethnic bind that many second generation Korean youth face (Kibria, 2000; Hovey et al, 2006). The difficulties that youth have when navigating through the ethnic bind may lead to a greater sense of acculturative stress and impact on their own ethnic sense of self (Hovey et al, 2006). Therefore, one could argue that the need for diversity of friends acts as a means of expanding their social networks for future opportunities while at the same time, there is this preference to maintain ethnic relations at the forefront in order to protect against others who racialize and stereotype this group. But, at the same time, the very act of negotiating these waters would enable the women to work towards fermenting their ethnic identity in the multicultural society. This was observed by Dion and Dion (2004) while studying second generation youth of immigrant families. Despite the high levels of parental control over the daughters, they seemed to have been able to successfully identify with their ethnic selves better than the males of the same group (Dion & Dion, 2004). Therefore, there is a need to

explore SGCKFY in relation to their degree of integrating into the host society while still retaining their own cultural values successfully.

Immigrant Women and Second Generation Girls

Women who settle into multicultural societies experience acculturative stress (Lalonde et al., 1992; Wong & Tsang, 2004). They work hard to ensure that they eventually integrate into the host society and also teach their children the culture. Lalonde and colleagues (1992) found that immigrant women who came to Canada positively identified themselves as Canadian compared to others who have identified them by their ethnic appearance. This creates problems whereby the ethnic limitations are reinforced upon them prior to the women being able to demonstrate their excitement and willingness to be part of the new society. These stereotypes of physical appearance, expectations of intelligence, the model minority beliefs and prototypical images placed on women with immigrant backgrounds are being perpetuated in the media, which are most of the time incorrect.

Sengupta (2006) examined fashion magazines aimed towards adolescent youth and found that there was inadequate Asian representation when promoting particular types of products. In particular, East Asians were overrepresented in the technology and media in stereotypical roles. Also, there was a gross underrepresentation of East Asians in the beauty section (Sengupta, 2006), indicating that the East Asian females who read magazines would take away the message that these females are not encapsulated in the ideology of beauty that has been created by North American and Canadian society. Results such as the above mentioned studies indicate that there are risk factors that may impact not only the immigrant women but also their daughters. Conversely, Wong and Tsang (2004) found this not to be the case for East Asian women. Despite many pressures from their own culture and from the host culture to conform based on the

practices from their ethnic country, these women found the strength to fight against these oppressive practices of maintaining the ethnic stereotypical images and assert themselves against external discrimination (i.e. racism) and gender inequalities. Exploring the spaces that these women occupied in Canadian society revealed the complexity and the resourcefulness of these women to overcome the challenges that they faced and the lessons that they have taught their own daughters (Wong & Tsang, 2004). Therefore, making generalized conclusions regarding immigrant women and their resignation to ethnic culture may be premature at this time. The lack of research around immigrant women, specifically Korean Canadian females, and their impact on SGKCFY indicate the need for more research to be conducted related to integration and SGKCFY. Further research is required to understand the agentic processes and to fill the gap in this research area. I will now discuss how I plan to move forward with this information.

Critical Realism

This project will be conducted through the critical realist lens. The term critical realism blends constructivism and positivism to allow the incorporation of a blend of the two perspectives into one theory (McEvoy et al., 2003; Bergin et al., 2008; Clegg, 2006).

Bhaskar (1989) articulated four main attributes of critical realist theory: generative mechanisms, stratified character of the world, dialectical interplay between social structures and human agency, and critique of the prevailing social order (McEvoy et al., 2003). The generative mechanisms are identified only when they are activated through specific events or experiences. For example, when a person feels threatened, defence mechanisms are used to deal with the experience. A stratified world refers to the different levels of social and natural reality in our world. For example, there is the biological stratification which can impact a person as much as the social stratification within the world. Bergin et al. (2008) described a person with a mental

illness who was dually impacted, based on various stratified realms, by the physiological, where there was an imbalance in a person's biological chemistry and the social, whereby the social interpretations of mental illness provide biased treatment towards them in public settings.

The social structures and their affect on human agency was an important factor in critical realist philosophy and to my study. The current social structures form the power structures evident in our current society. The structures influence humans involved, often resulting in inequality in treatment between different groups of individuals (McEvoy et al., 2003). Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 2000) described the feminist perspective of examining human agency in a non-oppressive and all-inclusive manner (as cited by Clegg, 2006). She described the need to move away from upward, downward and central conflation in order to discover the root of human agency. She expressed the importance of not solely examining the social aspect, the human aspect or only examining the structures as they arose from events in society (Clegg, 2006). Despite current circumstances, examining human agency allows researchers to further explore the factors that allow humans handle the pressures placed onto them by the various stratified layers of reality. There is also the potential to discover other factors that would allow a person to find the strength within herself and enact change in their immediate environment.

The last attribute within critical realism is to critique the social order. Researchers need to not only understand the complexity of the power structures and inequalities that are often seen in any society, but must be able to transcend their thinking beyond what is currently observed in society (McEvoy et al., 2003). When one identifies the problems with the current social and power structure, this provides an opening for dialogue to occur. Exposing the problem allows the dialogue to start and this in turn progresses the actions that groups can take in order to change

their current quality of life. Human agency is then able to take effect and subsequently make changes to the power structure.

Therefore, understanding the nuances and structures that are discovered with the SGKCFY will allow the discourses of race, gender and ethnic inequalities to surface. This will expose the various inequalities that affect this group and the process of overcoming these obstacles will allow the research to guide culturally specific health promotion in the multicultural context.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The literature yields variable conclusions regarding the levels of acculturation for female youth. Also, the need to examine the Korean Canadian female youth will be useful to demystify the needs of this group. The examination of the literature has yielded very little in terms of female adolescents. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to begin to examine the intricacies in various levels of society that are known and more importantly unknown to society that drives Korean Canadian females into a positive and strengths-based pathway while growing up in an multicultural society. Using a critical realist lens and applying critical ethnographic methods, I plan to examine the interrelationships that SGKCFY are exposed to in their immediate social domain, how this is interpreted within the individual microsystem and how the perceptions enable these individuals to successfully integrate in Toronto.

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