ETHNIC IDENTITY ACCULTURATION AND CONFLICT

The terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic group’ are derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’, normally translated as ‘people’ or ‘tribe’. The term ‘ethnic’ and related forms were used in English in the meaning of “Pagan/heathen” from the 14th century through the middle of the 19th century. An ethnic group is a group of human beings whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage that is real or presumed. Ethnic identity is further marked by the recognition from others of a group’s distinctiveness and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral or biological traits, real or presumed, as indicators of contrast to other groups. Ethnicity is an important means through which people can identify themselves. It is a fundamental factor in human life. It is a phenomenon inherent human experience.

Acculturation—Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact the original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the group remains distinct [Kottak 2007]. Despite definitions and evidence that acculturation entails two way process of change, research and theory have continued with a focus on the adjustment and changes experienced by minorities in response to their contact with the dominant majority. Thus acculturation can be conceived to be the process of cultural learning imposed upon minorities. If enculturation is first culture learning then acculturation is second culture learning.

Acculturation is extremely important for multiculturalists juveniles, affecting their identity. For juveniles in general, adolescence is a period of identity formation as well as establishing group affiliation and preference. Adolescence is a time when many changes occur, a time when children leave the small, comfortable heavens of elementary schools and enter large middle or junior school with more students and teachers. It is also a time when children begin to mature mentally and think more about their identity and where they fit in the world. Erikson suggested that one achieves an identity by means of a process of search and and commitment. He also claimed that an individual’s failure to achieve an identity can lead to confusion and despair.

Ethnic identity is a very complex process. It involves an interaction of contextual and development factors. For example family is a major force in this process. Family socialization plays a significant role in shaping the ethnic identity of adolescents. My study has shown a strong correlation between positive ethnic identity and adolescent’s self esteem, academic achievement and ability to cope discrimination and racism. The family provides its children with their first experience as members of a particular ethnic group. There is evidence to suggest that parents’ involvement in the ethnic community is directly related to an adolescent’s stable sense of ethnic identity of. Children In the same way parents who have difficulties with the process of acculturation and their own ethnic identity may facilitate adolescent’s conflicts. The conflict between old and new cultures values is brought to ahead in immigrant families because children acculturate more quickly to the new culture than their parents do. Immigrants’ parents fear that their children will acquire undesirable aspects of the new culture and that their children will loss their own cultures. At the same time however immigrants actively encourage their children to acquire the characteristics of new culture which will lead to success. Parents’
conflicting desires and expectations for their children can be extremely frustrating for their children. To a large extent these adolescents’ challenges are related to their parents’ experiences as immigrants. The psychological impact of immigration and acculturation on adult behavior influences adolescents’ developmental outcomes through the effect on parent’s child rearing practices and the affective quality of the family environment. How parents relate to their natal culture and to the host culture can be expected to affect adolescent’s ethnic identity achievement and their psychological functions.

This study collected data from 200 East Indian adolescents [150 males 50 females] and 40 immigrants’ parents. They were interviewed separately and completed questionnaires, assessing their acculturation, ethnic identity and family conflict. The Instrument were used Multigroup Ethnic Identity measures, Child Rearing Beliefs, measures and self description questionnaires. The study of Asian Indian immigrant families found that when both parents and adolescents had an integrated acculturation style, there was less family conflict, and also adolescents had higher academic achievement, self esteem, and better psychological adjustment than in families where parents and adolescents differed in their acculturation styles or parents were marginalized or separated from the mainstream culture.

Asian Indians are estimated to be 16 percent of the US immigrant population, with few exceptions, existing studies have tended to lump together the distinct ethnic groups that make up the ‘‘Asian’’ designation, thus obscuring the diversity in Asian American adolescents behavioral adjustment. Adolescence may be a particularly challenging developmental period for Asian Indian adolescents because they are also confronted with situations that concerns their race and skin colour, language skills, ethnicity and identity that may be confirming or disconfirming of origin. Adolescents of immigrant families have much more complicated tasks during the phase of development to establish a future sense of self identity. A well consolidated sense of self identity is more complicated for these types of immigrant families. The adolescents must rely on parental ego functions and their coherent sense of identity to whether this turbulent experiences. US born Asian Indian adolescents and their immigrant parents completed Questionnaires about family demography, self identification and acculturation. Results showed that parents and adolescents had similar styles of acculturation. Adolescents who had an integrated acculturation style had higher scores on the self perception profile than did adolescents who have separated or marginalized. So the findings tend tentative support for an integrated style of acculturation in promoting positive outcomes for first generation Asian Indian adolescents. Acculturation began to be conceived as the strategic reaction of the minority to continuous contact with the dominant group. There are several options the minority can choose, each with different motivation and consequences. These options includes assimilation to the majority culture, a defensive assertion of the minority culture, a bicultural blending of the two culture, a bicultural, alteration between cultures depending on contexts, or a diminishment of both cultures. Following Berry’s [1980; 2003] terminology, four major options or strategies are now commonly called assimilation [identity solely with the dominant culture and sever ties their own culture] marginalization [reject both their own and host culture] separate [identify solely with their group and reject the host culture] and integrate [become bicultural by maintaining aspects of their own group and selectively acquiring some of the host culture].
Acculturative stress refers to the psychological, somatic and social difficulties that may accompany acculturation processes. Ausbel [1960] first measured ‘acculturative stresses’ and many have since claimed that it is a significant problem for many minority people. Adolescents due to their membership both in an ethnic group and in the mainstream cultures face an extra problem with identity. This study investigating the psychological impact of immigration on family functioning and behavior and found that integration was the most psychologically adaptive pattern. Integrated individuals had less acculturative stress and anxiety than those who were separated and marginalized. The parents and the adolescents rating of their self identification and ethnic identity were positively associated. Parents who had a separated and marginalized style of acculturation reported higher conflict than those who had an integrated or assimilated style. Adolescents reported higher self esteem, less anxiety and less family conflict when there was no acculturation gap between them and their parents.

Ethnic Identity and Self-esteem-A positive correlation between ethnic identity and self esteem has been reported in studies with various populations. The research suggests that simply belonging to an ethnic group does not predict higher or lower levels of self esteem. It is the sense of belonging his or her ethnic group that better predicts self esteem [Helms, 1993, McMohand Watts, 2002 Phinney 1992]. Martinez and Dukas [1997] found among a multiracial sample of more than 12,000 adolescent that a stronger sense of ethnic identity is associated with higher self esteem and self esteem and self confidence. Phinney and Kohatsu [1997] found that low self regard and feelings of inadequacy accompany unexamined or low ethnic identity, whereas more developed levels of ethnic identity typically are associated with positive self concept of an absence of psychological distress. Integrated adolescents, who both maintain heritage culture practices are, adopt receiving culture practices reported the highest levels of parental involvement, positive parenting and family support. Generally adolescent who have achieved an ethnic identity have resolved uncertainties about the meaning of their ethnicity, feel comfortable with who they are and experiences relatively positive psychological functions in terms of high self esteem, academic motivation and achievement. Phinney proposed that an examined ethnic identity may insulate students from buying into automatic internalized, stereotypes that may undermine their academic confidence and influence them towards risky behaviors and interfere with social competition. She found that high school reporting average grades of A or B had more developed levels of ethnic identity and contribute to adolescent well being. By definitions an integrated acculturation style involves a positive orientation towards one’s own ethnic group and to other groups, all of which have been associated with positive psychological functioning. Integrated children reported that parents helped them develop a healthy social perspective. Integrated children reported positive levels of cohesion and adaptability in their families. Adolescents who reported a strong identity also reported that their families had done a lot to teach them about their ethnicity. The socialization that was taking place at home was a significant and important predictor of ethnic identity. Following a period of ethnic exploration adolescent may develop an integrated acculturation is related to positive outcomes like higher levels of self esteem, psychological adjustment and functions and etc. It may protect the adolescent against the internalization of negative stereotype, prejudice and discrimination and ultimately protect self esteem and reinforce the self concept.
Effective -Counseling Strategies:
I would like to give some recommendations that may help in the prevention of identity conflicts in culturally different adolescent.
1. Use community service. Through education and active inclusion of adolescents in the community center, we can help them to find a constructive place to identify with.

2. Encourage parent to continue being a channel or bridge between the child and their ethnic culture.
3. Educate parents in using the services available for them. They should have access to service that can help them to clarify their own ethnic identity conflicts.
4. Psychologists, teachers and other must be trained to work effectively with culturally different individuals and educate themselves about each culture they work with. Now I can conclude that ethnic identity conflicts are multidimensional. We all have a part in this and we must start now with each our own contribution. Parents need help in building the bridge between cultures. Adolescents must feel free to have more than one ethnic identity. The integration of the strengths of each culture will allow these adolescents to provide their best contribution to the society of ours.

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