

# The association between acculturation, emotional expressivity, and attitudes towards help seeking in a South Asian and Euro-Canadian student sample



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## INTRODUCTION

- In Canada, South Asian men and women have the highest reported rate of unmet mental healthcare needs (Gadalla, 2010).
- In this population there exists high rates of mental illness, yet disproportionately low use of mental health services (Islam, Khanlou, & Tamim, 2014).
- Two potential explanatory variables that have not received much research attention: emotional expressivity and acculturation
- Help-seeking research indicates that those who express their emotions openly (i.e., high emotional expressivity) are more likely to seek help for their mental health concerns (Leff, 1973).
- Acculturation has also been found to influence help-seeking behaviour in South Asians. Mainstream acculturation was positively correlated with how often South Asians used mental health services (Frey & Roysircar, 2006).
- However, currently there exists no research on the link between acculturation levels, emotional expressivity, and help-seeking beliefs and behaviours in South Asians, who represent the largest ethnic minority group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006).
- To help better understand why this gap exists between high rates of mental illness and low use of mental health resources among the Canadian South Asian population, this study examined the association between acculturation, emotional expressiveness, and help-seeking behaviour in a South Asian and Euro-Canadian student sample.

## METHOD

### Hypotheses:

- H1: In comparison to South Asian students, Euro-Canadians will have higher levels of emotional expressivity.
- H2: Euro-Canadians will endorse more positive attitudes towards help seeking, compared to South Asians.
- H3: Within each group, individuals with higher levels of mainstream acculturation will have higher levels of emotional expressivity.
- H4: Individuals with higher levels of mainstream acculturation will endorse more positive attitudes towards help seeking.
- H5: Individuals with higher levels of emotional expressivity will endorse more positive attitudes towards help seeking.

### Participants:

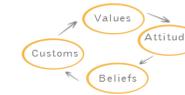
- 83 undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC). Inclusion criteria: Must identify as Euro-Canadian or South Asian

#### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Euro-Canadian	Canadian-born South Asian	Non-Canadian-born South Asian
<i>n</i>	17	47	19
Sex (% female)	82.4%	89.4%	89.5%
Age (years); mean (SD)	18.06 (.75)	18.74 (3.99)	18.11 (.46)
Born in Canada (%)	100%	100%	0%
Canadian Citizenship	100%	100%	84.2%
Education (years); mean (SD)	13.06 (1.03)	13.23 (1.15)	12.89 (1.15)

### Measures:

#### ACCULTURATION MEASURE



- The Vancouver Index of Acculturation** (VIA; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000)
- 20-item bidimensional measure of acculturation. Items load onto two separate subscales:
- Heritage Subscale:** extent to which respondents identify with their culture of origin.
  - e.g.: "I often participate in my heritage culture traditions"
- Mainstream Subscale:** extent to which respondents identify with Canadian mainstream culture.
  - e.g.: "I often participate in mainstream Canadian traditions".

#### EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVITY MEASURES

- The Emotional Expressivity Scale** (EES; Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994)
  - 17-item self-report questionnaire measures outward expression of emotions.
    - e.g.: "I display my emotions to other people".
- The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire** (BEQ; Gross & John, 1995)
  - 16-item self-report emotional expressivity scale that consists of three facets:
  - Negative Expressivity:** tendency to express negative emotions (e.g., anger)
    - e.g.: "People often do not know what I am feeling".
  - Positive Expressivity:** tendency to express positive emotions (e.g., excitement)
    - e.g.: "Whenever I feel positive emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling".
  - Impulse Strength:** strength of emotional responses an individual typically displays
    - e.g.: "I sometimes cry during sad movies".
- The Attitudes Towards Emotional Expression Scale** (AEE; Joseph et al., 1994)
  - 20-item self-report questionnaire measures general attitudes towards expressing one's emotions
    - e.g.: "I think other people don't understand your feelings".

#### HELP SEEKING MEASURE

- The Beliefs About Psychological Services** (BAPS; Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2009)
  - 18-item questionnaire examining individual's beliefs regarding the outcome of therapy, labeling (negative views), and the influence of stigmas surrounding therapy that impact service use.
  - BAPS is divided into three subscales: Intent, Stigma Tolerance, and Expertness.
  - Intent scale:** measures individual's willingness to seek help if needed.
    - e.g.: "If a good friend asked my advice about a serious problem, I would recommend that he/she see a psychologist".
  - Stigma Tolerance:** measures one's tolerance for the stigma associated with using psychological services.
    - e.g.: "I would feel uneasy going to a psychologist because of what some people might think" (reverse coded).
  - Expertness subscale:** examines individuals' beliefs in the merit of psychological services based on the expertness level of psychologists.
    - e.g.: "Because of their training, psychologists can help you find solutions to your problems".

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Reliability of the VIA Mainstream Subscale, EES, BEQ Subscales, AEE, and BAPS Subscales by Group

	Euro-Canadian	Canadian-born South Asian	Non-Canadian-born South Asian
VIA – Mainstream	0.79	0.74	0.66
EES	0.90	0.87	0.90
BEQ Negative	0.86	0.67	0.60
BEQ Positive	0.60	0.55	0.50
BEQ Impulse Strength	0.70	0.81	0.87
AEE	0.88	0.84	0.85
BAPS Intent	0.81	0.75	0.85
BAPS Stigma Tolerance	0.91	0.73	0.83
BAPS Expertness	0.81	0.69	0.82

## STATISTICAL ANALYSES

- One-way ANOVAs were conducted to test H1 and H2
- Correlational analyses were used to examine H3, H4, and H5

#### ANOVA results found:

**H1:** No significant group differences on emotional expressivity

**H2:** No significant group differences in attitudes towards help seeking,

#### Correlational analyses found:

**H3:** No significant correlations between VIA mainstream and EES, or VIA mainstream and AEE

- Unexpected findings between VIA mainstream and BEQ Subscales:
- Euro-Canadians had a positive correlation between Positive Expressivity and mainstream acculturation, and Impulse Strength and mainstream acculturation
- Canadian-born South Asians had a positive correlation between Negative Expressivity and mainstream acculturation

**H4:** Mainstream acculturation did not significantly correlate with attitudes towards help seeking

**H5:** No significant correlations found between emotional expressivity and individuals intent to seek psychological services

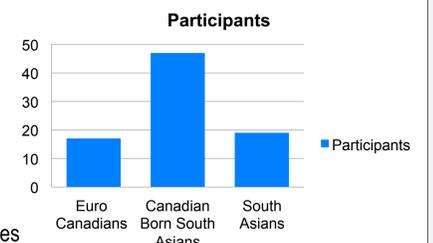
- Noteworthy findings : Canadian-born South Asian group, significant positive correlation between BEQ Positive Expressivity and BAPS Expertness, and also showed a negative correlation between AEE and the BAPS Stigma Tolerance
- Among Non-Canadian-born South Asian group, Negative Expressivity correlated negatively with the BAPS Expertness subscale

## DISCUSSION

- Taken together, these findings suggest a relationship does exist between emotional expressivity and one's attitudes towards help seeking.
- Our findings build upon the limited research on the Canadian South Asian population, and support why more research needs to be done in these domains.

#### Key limitations:

- small sample size, predominantly female (88%)
- non clinical population
- first year psychology students
- validity of questionnaires



- Further research should examine the influence culture may have on the expression of certain types of emotions (e.g., negative vs. positive).

- Research on how acculturation and emotional expressivity may influence help seeking behaviour in this population can have a direct effect on improving the provision of culturally sensitive care

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