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An Exploration of the Identity of South African Indian Female University Students: A Transgenerational Perspective

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A research paper submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, March 2024.

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Abstract

The meanings assigned to gender, race, culture and identity in post-apartheid South Africa are deeply embedded within the historical journeys and struggles of different population groups across the country. For many individuals, connections to the past are found within family legacies and intergenerational stories which shape and define understandings of who they are. This study sought to understand the role of these family narratives in constructing the identity of young South African Indian women today. Participant interviews and genogram data were obtained from eight women between the ages of 18-25, who were students at the University of the Witwatersrand. The findings of this study revealed that participants adopted hybrid identities which incorporated values associated with traditional gender roles for women as well as ideals and behaviours based on more modern values. The manner in which participants negotiate between these different understandings of femininity is influenced by a sense of obligation and duty towards their families, which linked closely with previous research on collectivist culture. These findings are further contextualised and understood using Bowen's Family Systems Theory and understandings of differentiation.

Keywords: South African Indian women, Transgenerational Family Theory, identity, collectivism, hybridity

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The complexities laden in the question commonly linked to identity, namely, "Who am I?" are reflected in the varying interdisciplinary theories and approaches to the topic. For family systems theorists, the family unit is a primary site of identity formation, acting as one of the first places from which we get a sense of who we are (Marchetti-Mercer, 2006). Individual and family identities are located within, and both shape and are shaped by, societal systems such as politics, gender, race, culture and ethnicity (McGoldrick et al., 2006). In South Africa, this is especially relevant since because of our socio-political history, our society is, in many ways, structured and organised according to our ethnic and racial identities (Pillay, 2015). Even before we have discovered and constructed who we believe ourselves to be, our physical form embodies racial markers that have implications and consequences for our experiences as South Africans (Markus, 2015; Pillay, 2015) For South African women, two of the most significant ways this embodiment occurs is through the classifications of race and gender. This automatically impacts how an individual is positioned and located both within society (Mayer & Barnard, 2015) and the family system (Knudson-Martin, 1994). This study focuses specifically on young, South African Indian women and aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on identity within post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, this study seeks to better understand the identity of the South African Indian woman today by exploring family histories and the meanings individuals attribute to these within the context of broader South African history. The theoretical framework of Transgenerational (also known as Intergenerational) Family Theory will be used as a lens to further explore how constructions of various aspects of identity are shaped by transmission of values, behaviours and stories across generations within families.

1.2 Clarification of key concepts

1.2.1 Culture

Attempting to present an all-encompassing definition of culture is challenging since the concept is understood differently across and within disciplines (Baldwin et al., 2006). Culture is a multi-layered term which can have various implications, depending on which of the core characteristics and aspects of the concept are highlighted (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). For example, Falicov (1995) presents a broad definition that highlights the social and shared nature of culture. Her definition also includes examples of different contexts that commonly inform membership to cultural groupings in society such as "rural, urban or suburban setting; language, age, gender, cohort, family configuration, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology; migration and stage of acculturation" (Falicov, 1995, p.2). This is particularly important in the South African context where elements of cultural identity, such as race, were historically used to 'other' and oppress groups of individuals (Marchetti-Mercer, 2006). With this in mind, it is also important to consider McGoldrick and Hardy's (2019) point regarding labels in society. Labels, which in this case are related to cultural classification and identification, can be destructive and used to inform in-group and out-group thinking (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2019). They can also be reassuring to members of a particular group, creating a sense of connectedness and commonality (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2019). This is important to hold in mind as it reflects the complex personal and social implications of what it means to identify with a particular cultural group.

1.2.2 Ethnicity

McGoldrick et al. (2006, p.2) state that ethnicity "refers to a group's commonality of ancestry and history, through which people have evolved shared values and customs over the centuries." Ethnicity involves the idea of shared origins based on a "combination of race,

religion and cultural history" (McGoldrick et al., 2006, p.2). Ethnic values, which reflect traditions and dominant belief systems, are transmitted and maintained across generations (Dein, 2006). McGoldrick et al. (2006, p.6) note that ethnicity is constantly evolving, as each new generation engages in processes of "incorporating ancestral influences while forging new and emerging group identities."

1.3 Background to the study

According to 2021 statistics, the total 'Indian/Asian' population group is estimated at 1.5 million, which makes up 2.5% of the South African population (Pillay, 2015; Statista, 2021). Pillay (2015) states that the racial category 'Indian' in South Africa first came into use after the arrival of the indentured labourers in Natal in 1860. Literature has highlighted the political complexities of being a South African of Indian descent and the ways in which these have influenced individuals' engagement and self-identification with the racial classification (Desai, 2019; Desai & Vahed, 2012; Gopal & Marimuthu, 2017; Pillay, 2015; Vahed & Desai, 2017). For example, Pillay (2015) highlights the social negotiations of identity that occur for the many individuals who are classified as 'Indian' based on their appearance but do not personally identify with this label. She cites one of the reasons for this as an individuals' lack of resonance with the idea of having any ties to the physical location of India. On the other hand, many South Africans may hold onto their racial identification of 'Indian' because of the perceived connection with the rich cultural history of India that offers a sense of belonging (Gopal & Marimuthu, 2017) This links to the personal and varied nature of the interpretations and personal meanings associated with Indian identity in South Africa (Desai, 2019; Gopal & Marimuthu, 2017).

Literature indicates that the shape and positioning of the Indian identity in South Africa has varied depending on political circumstances at particular points in history. For example, in the 1950's, the National Party (NP) and its supporters attempted to motivate for

why Indians could not be integrated into South African society (Ebrahim-Vally, 2001). In 1961, Indians were accepted by the government, but this was following many failed attempts to repatriate the group (Pillay, 2015). This demonstrates how Indians have had to negotiate their place within South African society (Vahed & Desai, 2010a). The government also propagated the idea of Indians as a homogenous group through apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act which physically grouped all individuals identified as 'Indian' together (Pillay, 2015). It is also important to note that as a result of the shared struggles of apartheid, many Indians today identify as black (Desai, 2019). However, there are many black people who contest this, citing the ways certain Indian people benefited from apartheid (Vahed & Desai, 2017). These points illustrate the idea of Indianness in South Africa as externally defined and socially and politically imposed at various levels. This is also in line with a point made by Hall (1994, p395) who states that identity and belonging are "not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture."

1.4 Rationale

For mental health professionals, the consideration of identity forms part of the building blocks of therapeutic formulation (Ergün, 2020; Tummala-Narra, 2015). Rigazio-DiGilio et al. (2005, p.19) note the importance of this, stating that "how individuals and families understand their own sense of identity helps to determine the beliefs and values they use as filters to experience, interpret, and adapt to everyday interactions in the world." In diverse contexts such as South Africa, it is imperative that psychologists consider the extent to which the intersections of race and gender shape an individuals' sense of self (Day-Vines et al., 2007). McGoldrick and Hardy (2019) state that for family therapists, knowledge and awareness of the influence of societal systems is essential when understanding dynamics and interpersonal processes within a family system. There is a dearth of recent literature on South African Indian families and contemporary identity within generations of younger individuals

born post-apartheid. This study thus aimed to address this gap by shedding light on some of the unique issues and nuances of identity of young, South African Indian women. It aimed to do this by exploring transgenerational processes within this population in the context of their family-of-origin. This may assist practitioners in understanding more about the family systems and values associated with South African Indians and the impact this has on identity formation. Further understanding how Indian women make sense of their identities in relation to the family system can provide useful knowledge for psychological practitioners in the South African context.

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the topic by presenting the background to and rationale for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter aims to provide a detailed review of the existing literature on the identity of South African Indian women. This chapter also presents an overview of the chosen theoretical framework, transgenerational family theory.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents a detailed account of the methods and processes followed throughout the research study. This chapter presents the rationale for the chosen research approach and design as well as the data collection and data analysis process. Trustworthiness, ethical considerations and reflexivity will also be discussed.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the major themes that were obtained from the analysis of the interview data, as guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process and the genogram analysis.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. It offers an analysis of the research findings in relation to the existing literature and through the theoretical lens of transgenerational family theory.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter aims to provide a summary of the relevant findings, an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research on this topic.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the different theoretical aspects associated with South African Indian female identity and how this is constructed both on an individual level and the family system within the broader socio-political landscape of the country. Firstly, an overview of the challenges associated with defining race and cultural identity in South Africa will be discussed. Next, a brief history of Indians in South Africa, the associated identity negotiations encountered and the impact on contemporary South African Indian identity today will be presented. The evolution and nuances of the identity of South African Indian women will be discussed next. The central tenets of Transgenerational Family Theory, the chosen theoretical framework, will be presented thereafter. Lastly, literature on the transmission of ethnic values and identity processes within the family system will be examined.

2.1 Race, culture and identity in South Africa

2.1.1 The complex nature of racial classification

Attempting to summarise or to provide a conclusive definition of the concept of race is challenging due to the varied descriptions and dimensions associated with the idea as described in literature in different biological and social disciplines. Hardimon (2012) argues that race can be viewed as a 'scientific concept' when referencing the grouping together of individuals based on morphological differences, mediated by factors such as geographical location and ancestry. However, Roth (2016) argues that, particularly when the social impact of race is considered, it is imperative that scholars engage with the concept as more than a label or method of classification that can be subjectively assigned to an individual. Instead, she provides examples of the various nuances of race that shape ones lived experience: "how an individual self-identifies her race, how she is perceived by others, how she believes she is

perceived by others, what she checks among the limited options on the census or other surveys, her skin colour and other aspects of her racial appearance, and her racial ancestry" (Roth, 2016, p.2). The discrepancies between self-classification and assigned classification are exceptionally relevant when considering the historical legacies associated with hierarchy and the various social implications imbued in racial categories (Davenport, 2020).This is a particularly relevant backdrop to acknowledge when attempting to understand conversations regarding racial identity within the South African context.

Literature on the concept of race and identity in post-apartheid South Africa is vast, complex and laden with strong convictions and often opposing perspectives. A common theme is the referencing of the oppressive nature of the need for racial classification itself, and the challenges associated with this. For example, Pillay (2019) references the fact that an individual within the South African context cannot identify as anything other than one of the four major race groups in the country: Black, White, Coloured or Indian. Francis (2006) notes that legal and legislative procedures, such as census documents, allow for an individual to choose their preferred racial category and are thus based on self-identification. However, within broader South African society, race is still based and assigned to others largely based on physical characteristics, such as one's skin colour (Francis, 2006). Pillay (2017b) lists numerous challenges associated with this, for example, the creation of stereotypes that then become associated with racial groups. This homogenises the experience associated with race and how different groups are perceived, but also affects how individuals understand and make sense of their own identities (Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2012; Pillay, 2019). For example, Berlein (2021) outlines the complexities of living in post-apartheid South Africa as a mixed-race individual and the different internal negotiations that occur when navigating questions of identity and belonging. This is evident since racial classification is deeply embedded into every aspect of social and legislative policies within post-apartheid South Africa (Petrus &

Isaacs-Martin, 2012; Pillay, 2019). Additionally, Esprey (2013) notes that the racial identity with which one identifies, communicates to the external world, the level of education, place of residence (geographic location), culture, social status, language, and history associated with that particular racial group. This also speaks to the different ways an individual's identity is framed depending on the historical socio-political positioning of one's particular associated racial group (Esprey, 2013). This is further linked with the oppressive origins of the concept of race itself.

Maré (2011) asserts that, "Race, when applied to human beings, can never be a neutral descriptive term but carries, is overloaded with the historical baggage of exploitation, domination and dehumanisation" (p.617). Zegeye and Ahluwalia (2002) add on this, pointing out that all other racial classifications emerged in response to the 'white' category. Challenging this viewpoint, Balibar et al. (1991) state that the concept of race is constantly being transformed and reshaped by individuals who identify with the various classifications. Furthermore, they highlight the subjective nature of belonging to a racial group, and the important role that this plays in cementing one's identity and establishing a sense of who one is. This speaks to one of the reasons why race and awareness of racial difference is crucial within the South African context, which will be discussed next.

2.1.2 Race, reform and belonging in South Africa

Forde et al. (2021) state that race is a vital aspect of reform and reparation within South African society. This is also an important part of naming and challenging the hierarchy of race that is interwoven into the conscious and unconscious experiences of South African citizens (Ebrahim-Vally, 1999). However, authors have also drawn attention to the fact that hyperfocus on race also further entrenches the idea of a society that is structured based on difference to the other (Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2012). In terms of identity, this also means that our sense of self is composed by drawing on understandings of difference, rather than

similarity, which certain individuals have noted is counterproductive to the idea of fostering a united, less divided South Africa (Petrus & Isaacs-Martin, 2012; Pillay, 2017a). On the other hand, Carrim (2019) has argued that the concept of race within society forms part of the identity process by helping individuals produce an internal sense of coherence and distinctiveness. Thus, she presents the idea that as part of mitigating the anxieties associated with living within a society organised by racial hierarchy, there is also something containing about identifying with a particular group and fostering a sense of belonging to this group. This is relevant especially when considering the South African Indian classification and the historical context from which this was born.

2.2 Historical context: The first Indians in SA and identity negotiations

Most literature on the topic of South African Indians in South Africa today begins with a description of the first migrant labourers who arrived from India in the 19th century. Pillay (2017b) highlights the significance of this historical moment, stating that the arrival of the first group of indentured Indians prompted the creation of a racial category or classification of people that did not exist before in this country. The first Indians in South Africa arrived in the colony of Natal in 1860 as indentured labourers (Diesel, 2007). After Natal was claimed as a British colony in 1843, settlers experimented with a variety of crops but found sugar cane farming to be the most lucrative (Desai & Vahed, 2012). Seeking out cheap labour, settlers turned to India since many of the indigenous Zulu people refused to enter into contractual relationships with the British (Desai & Vahed, 2012). The indentured system in South Africa involved an agreement between the British and Indian migrant labourers, who signed contracts of service for a minimum of three years, after which they were considered 'free' (Kuper, 1960). Desai and Vahed (2012) state that between 1860 and 1911, 152 641 individuals arrived from the south Indian city of Madras and the northern areas of Bihar and Uttar Pradhesh and were hired to work on the sugar estates. In the late 1890s,

other groups of Indian immigrants from around Bombay and Gujarat moved to South Africa and became known as 'passenger' Indians who came to Natal as mainly traders (Diesel, 2007; Hiralal, 2013). Indian migrants came from various castes, but most of the indentured labourers were Tamils belonging to the lower-caste, *Sudra* (labourer) group (Diesel, 2007). Most of the Indians who arrived were Hindu, while a smaller number (mainly from the passenger Indians) were Muslim (Modi, 2005). In terms of language, depending on the region of India they had relocated from, individuals spoke mainly Tamil, Telegu, Hindi or Gujarati (Mesthrie, 1992).

Indian migrants in South Africa had to negotiate and re-define their identities in various ways. Firstly, Indians had to position their unique ethnic identities in relation to British colonial powers and racial tensions with black African people (Gopal & Marimuthu, 2017; Vahed & Desai, 2017). Their identification as 'Indians' within their new context was based on the need of the state to classify and organise the racial hierarchy within the colony. Thus, although they arrived as a diverse group, from different religions, castes and linguistic backgrounds, acknowledgment of this heterogeneity was not possible, as the Indian migrants were grouped together and positioned in relation to their white superiors. Indian migrants then found themselves in a position where they were categorised together with individuals who they felt different from, but at the same time identified with because of their shared experiences of hardship and oppression. Additionally, Morris (1969, p.105) states that their identity as 'Indians' in the South African context was shaped by their identification "with the common country of origin and from cultures that were closer to each other than to those of other racial sections." This aligns with Hall (1994) who, reflecting on the construction of cultural identity in diasporas, describes how identities are shaped in relation to the 'Other.' In other words, conceptualisations of the self are influenced by understandings of what, or rather who one it is not. Hall (1994) explains that this differentiation forms over time in response to

the hierarchical and oppressive ideologies that were deeply ingrained in society by colonial structures that positioned certain groups as the lesser-than, inferior other. Thus, the unifying of this group of individuals under the category 'Indians' was also founded on the need to form a sense of solidarity and resistance against the colony that imposed this classification on them initially. Furthermore, the tensions between difference and similarity shed light on the subjective complexities associated with simultaneously identifying and dis-identifying with others in the shared racial category, against the backdrop of a prejudiced and oppressive state.

The second way Indians had to re-construct their identity was through the processes of translating and adapting their traditions, values, beliefs and practices to fit within the new, foreign space they found themselves in. Gautam (2013, p.2) states that, "The individual as the carrier of cultural baggage transports it to new cultural surroundings where he sorts out his experience and adapts himself in a new country." For the indentured labourers, cultural baggage consisted of unique elements associated with Indian culture, such as religious ritual and music (Vahed & Desai, 2010b). These practices formed part of the coping mechanisms individuals used to navigate the extreme demands of the indenture system (Desai & Vahed, 2010). Recreating these links to India in Natal gave the indentured a sense of what Desai and Vahed (2012) termed the 'imaginary homeland (p.204). This is linked to Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' which highlights the sense of unity, comradeship and solidarity that is felt by an individual when thinking about their national identity (Calhoun, 2016). This occurs even though an individual may never interact with, meet or personally know others from that place (Phillips, 2002). Phillips (2002) states that this identification arouses a deep personal attachment that is born from the individual yearning for belonging and connection. Additionally, Chetty (2013) states that because of the difficulties faced within their new environment, these individuals may have experienced a "feeling of nostalgia for an idealised past" (p.60). Furthermore, Maghbouleh (2010) states that this is often experienced and

transmitted within family systems through a concept she refers to as ‘inherited nostalgia.’ This highlights how migration experiences and memories shape and influence future generations understandings of heritage and cultural identity (Maghbouleh, 2010).

Sierra & McQuitty (2007) explain that the feeling of nostalgia can be based on either lived or learned memories for an individual. Marchetti-Mercer and Virga (2023) explain that for second and third-generation immigrants, these learned memories are inherited from their parents, who pass down links to the country of origin through national and cultural traditions and practices. Literature has noted how these customs form part of recreating a desire to emulate what once was experienced in the ’homeland.’ For example, various authors have explained how religious practice acted as a way for Indian migrants to practice and internalise aspects associated with family, home and roots which grounded their identities during a time where their persons were being classified by political powers (Chetty, 2013; Desai, 2013; Kumar, 2012). This will be discussed next.

2.3 Religious identity and the South African Indian diaspora

In terms of their identity in the eyes of the South African state, all migrants from India were pigeonholed into the ‘Indian’ racial category (Khan, 2009). Religious identity thus highlighted the nuances and layers of difference between one another, thus internally being able to maintain the understanding of the population as a heterogenous one. This is relevant especially when considering religion as an ‘identity marker’ that acts to legitimise and preserve one’s social identity, particularly in contexts where segregation is prevalent (Parveen & Siddiqui, 2016; Singh, 2008). Khan (2009) illustrates this as she draws attention to the experience of Muslim migrants and the friction that existed with their Hindu counterparts, mentioning the “intra-community marginalisation and alienation” (p.98). For these individuals, religion acted as a defining factor that differentiated them from other labourers, but also connected them to a sense of home and their ‘own’ people (Khan, 2009).

Further, because it differentiated them from others, it also acted as a characterising aspect of both their internal sense of identity and their perceived identity amongst other non-Muslim migrants and individuals from other racial groupings in South Africa at the time (Khan, 2009).

The link between religious identity and Indianness in South Africa has been emphasised across literature. For example, Vawda (2017) discusses that the religions of Hinduism and Islam, initially brought to South Africa by Indian migrants, are still today stereotypically thought of as "Indian religions" (p.59). She discusses the interchangeable use and unintentional equating of terms such as race, religion, culture, and ethnicity that is often referenced colloquially in everyday discourse of South Africans. Vahed's (2020) example of Muslim individuals in South Africa who have adopted aspects of religion as part of their culture illustrates how various aspects of identity coalesce for the individuals who express and embody these. Commenting on the various meanings assigned to this, Singh (2008) highlights the sense of pride and emotional weight embedded within the expression of religious identity for South African Indian individuals. He discusses this within the context of family, explaining how the continuity of religious practice across generations creates a sense of collective identity and belonging. Considering the impact of this on second and third-generation migrants, literature draws attention to the major challenge experienced by these individuals involving negotiating the religious values of their families and the differing ethnic systems present in the host country. For example, Marie Skandrani et al. (2012) discuss how daughters of Muslim immigrant parents have both held onto and redefined their belief systems as part of creating a hybrid religious identity experienced as authentic and in line with their lived experience. At times, participants from this study noted that these deviations from the traditions they had been taught were experienced as transgressions, resulting in feelings of guilt, shame and fears of rejection by their parents (Marie Skandrani et al., 2012).

Commenting on the complex links between family and transmitted ethnic belief systems for participants, Marie Skandrani et al. (2012) note that "these young women do not turn away from religion, which would represent a too painful denial of their parents." (p.86). This is important to consider when thinking about the importance of transmitted cultural and religious belief systems, and how conformity and/or deviation from these may shape the emotional experience of relationships and the fabric of the collective identity within families.

2.4 Contemporary South African Indian identity in post-apartheid South Africa

Literature grounded within the post-apartheid South African context presents both unifying definitions of South African 'Indianness' as well as subjective, individually defined experiences that differ based on different variables. Boshoff (2011) describes a shared sense of consciousness that connects South African Indians rooted in their history of indenture, marginalisation, and racial discrimination. Desai (2019), on the other hand, states that many South Africans with an Indian heritage and family history choose to identify instead as Black, because of their personal connection with the shared history of oppression faced under apartheid. Berlein (2021) also speaks to the idea of hybrid South African Indian identities, as she sheds light on the complexities of identifying as 'mixed-race' in South Africa. Her autobiographical thesis describes two interconnected sets of social difficulties encountered as a mixed-race South African who is located 'in-between' racial categories. Firstly, she speaks about how the differences between racial groups are framed as deceptively clear-cut and distinct entities within various spheres of everyday South African life. Thus, for an individual who does not neatly fit into these, questions regarding identity (personal and group) and belonging are raised (Berlein, 2021). Secondly, this external conflict then mirrors an internal challenge of needing to negotiate the parts of oneself that identify with different racial groups, and as Berlein (2021) experienced as opposing one another at times. For example, she describes feeling as though the Indian parts of herself were 'othered' and not accepted

within settings which felt predominantly White. Various authors have echoed a similar sentiment, arguing that this is because South African Indians are still very much viewed as outsiders and as not fully belonging to South Africa (Boshoff, 2011; Pillay, 2017a, 2019; Radhakrishnan, 2005). A concept that has been highlighted as imperative to understanding this struggle is that of 'diaspora' and how this is relevant to the evolution of the South African Indian identity.

The concept of a 'diaspora' has been explored through various conceptual paradigms across disciplines. Dufoix (2018) states that earliest uses of the word were associated with the physical relocation of individuals from their homeland following a traumatic event or forced removal. Grossman (2019, p.1297) elaborates on this, defining a diaspora as "a transnational community whose members (or their ancestors) emigrated or were dispersed from their original homeland but remain oriented to it and preserve a group identity." This emotional connection to one's country of origin is explained by King and Christou (2010) who state that this is underpinned by individuals' subjective experiences of alienness and difference in their destination country. This is relevant when considering the harsh migration history associated with South African Indians as well as their attempts to preserve a connection to India. Additionally, when examining the descendants of these individuals and the South African Indian racial category today, a theme that is prevalent across academic works involves the use of and meanings associated with the idea of a diaspora and how these account for and/ or dismiss experiences within the population group. For example, Kunvar (2014) critiques notions of diaspora which frame South African Indians in post-apartheid as belonging more to India than to their home country of South Africa. Furthermore, she cautions against the implication of 'sameness' that may be associated with classifying all South African Indians under the term 'diaspora,' referencing the diverse circumstances of the group's migration history and demographic nuances (Kunvar, 2014). On the other hand, Chetty (2013) states

that the use of the term ‘diaspora’ references the idea that many SA Indians today draw parts of their identity from the physical location of India. She explains this by referencing the fact that this occurred during the time of indenture and was then transmitted across generations, citing the example of religious practice and continuity. Boshoff (2011) expands on this idea, stating that South African Indian youths today are faced with the task of how to cement their identities as South Africans while also being linked to a culture associated with the physical location of India. She highlights the need of younger South African Indians to safeguard their culture and the practices perceived as traditional that have been taught to them by previous generations. At the same time, this need also exists in tension with a desire to be “modern,” influenced by Western globalisation and broad experiences of living within a diverse South Africa with ever-changing expressions of multi-cultural practices (Boshoff, 2011, p.29). Thus, Chetty (2013) argues that South African Indian identity today is concerned with both connecting to a ‘pure’ sense of culture derived from India, while simultaneously modifying and tailoring expressions of ‘Indianness’ to the South African context.

Kunvar (2014) highlights the idea of a dual sense of belonging; South African Indians are both connected to the physical locations of South Africa and India in such a way that the one cannot exist without the other. She explains this by noting that an individual’s experience of Indianness is “an integral part of experiencing and interacting with the world which is inextricably tied to living in South Africa and being South African” (Kunvar, 2014, p.32). Boshoff (2011) provides an example of this in a participant response from a South African Indian woman, who noted that although she could speak Hindi, she imagined that she would feel like an outsider if she were to go to India. Thus, her ability to speak an Indian language is more relevant to her positioning and sense of identity within the South African context (Boshoff, 2011). In other words, it is the idea of being connected to India, rather than the physical location of India itself that offers meaning for South African Indian individuals

(Boshoff, 2011). Therefore, connections to India, through factors such as physical attire, music, religious practice, cuisine and social values and belief systems, become part of one's identity as a way of distinctly differentiating oneself from other South Africans (Boshoff, 2011; Kunvar, 2014; Sana, 2022). This links with the idea that Indianness within the South African context is linked to heritage and a way of asserting identity to guard against experiences of marginalisation within the post-apartheid landscape (Radhakrishnan, 2019). This is described by Radhakrishnan (2005) as the performance of culture by minority groups in an attempt to enhance visibility and to be recognised as a distinct racial and ethnic group by the state. It is interesting to note that for South African Indian individuals, these characteristics which distinguish them from other racial groups in South Africa would be perceived differently by both the self and others within the physical location of India itself (Boshoff, 2011). This further highlights the importance of examining this racial identity within its place of origin to fully engage with the intricacies of how it is shaped by the South African landscape. Kunvar (2014) speaks to the complex nature of this in her assertion that each South African Indian individual, engages in "a tense oscillation between two primary loci of identity (Indianness and South Africanness)" which also overlap, diverge and oppose each other at different times (Kunvar, 2014, p.36). She thus states that studies related to the experiences of South African Indian identity should be viewed as a snapshot or a moment in time, reflecting a concept that is dynamic and constantly shifting based on a multitude of individual, socio-cultural, and political forces.

2.5 The Evolution of the Identity of South African Indian Women

A review of the existing literature on South African Indian women often presents the idea of a 'modern' versus a 'traditional' understanding of identity (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Nadar, 2001; Schmidt & Mestry, 2021). It thus becomes necessary to understand the evolution of this identity across the changing conditions of South African history. During the

time of indenture, Seedat-Khan (2012) states that women played a fundamental role in maintaining and promoting an environment and family lifestyle similar to that of traditional Indian society at the time. She states, “Through religion, culture, and diet, women reproduced the Indian way of life in Natal” (Seedat-Khan, 2012, p.37). The indentured system meant that the role of the labourer was also added to the primary duties of a wife, mother and homemaker already expected of an Indian woman (Seedat-Khan, 2012). However, for many individuals, the notion of the traditional family system was completely disrupted by the severe realities of the indenture system. Single, unmarried, and widowed women were forced to live with multiple men (Desai & Vahed, 2012). Stories of sexual exploitation and abuse were common, and children born from these encounters became the sole responsibility of the woman (Seedat-Khan, 2012). Literature highlights the multiple layers of oppression women faced under both the harsh colonial authorities and the patriarchal system that influenced gender relations amongst indentured labourers (Desai & Vahed, 2010; Diesel, 2007; Meer, 1972; Seedat-Khan, 2012). Seedat-Khan (2012) asserts that these experiences shaped the unique social, cultural and political nature of the South African Indian female identity, passed down from generation to generation thereafter.

Although the values and norms associated with South African Indians are vast and varied, literature on the topic reflects particular themes related to this. ‘Cultural values’ associated with South African Indians are linked to ideas of passivity in women (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016), gender roles (Schmidt & Mestry, 2021), and notions of femininity rooted in patriarchal belief systems (Sana, 2022). Balaram (2018, p.7) states that within post-colonial societies, “Gender and gendered expectations also heavily organise how the responsibility of maintaining notions of purity and tradition fall on women, who come to represent the success or failure of cultural perseveration.” Sana (2022) presents an example of this, referencing how for South African Indians today, food symbolises both connections with ideas of home

and belonging, as well as an expression of group identity. She states that within the South African Indian community, women are still very much responsible for the food preparation process within Indian families and are thus in charge of maintaining the sense of cultural expression and continuity present in food. Thus, although women are generally not given a choice in this, because of the sense of control and autonomy that they are entrusted with in the kitchen, it is common for women to assert and construct their identities in relation to the idea of food production (Sana, 2022). She goes on to further explain how this is seen today with South African Indian females on social media who structure their content creation around the idea of authentic Indian food, pride, family and connection (Sana, 2022). Radhakrishnan (2019) references the example of classical Indian dancing traditions within the South African context and how this is another way that Hindu women in the country maintain a link to their heritage. Furthermore, she highlights the idea of women as cultural carriers and notes the pressure that is then put on women to keep the art form, and thus the Indian culture itself, alive, pure and uncontaminated by Western society (Radhakrishnan, 2019).

Nadar (2001) makes an argument regarding the illusory idea of the 'liberated' South African Indian woman as she states that women are now expected to undertake new roles in addition to the more traditional ones expected from previous generations. Carrim and Nkomo (2016) add to this, citing the example of women who have to balance their careers in addition to their family life. They highlight the experiences of South African Indian women today who express that to allow their career to trump their prioritisation of family could result in them being made to feel isolated and ostracised by their communities and families. Meer (1972) highlights the complex dynamics that existed between generations of women previously within South African Indian families as emphasis was placed on the transmission and continuity of cultural and family principles. A study by Singh and Harisunker (2010) suggests

that these attitudes are still very much held today. They found that young Indian females in South Africa often shape life ideals and goals relating to marriage and education in accordance with the values ingrained by their mothers and grandmothers. This idea is further explained by Inman et al. (2007) who note that Indian traditions emphasise the idea of a joint family setup where mothers, grandmothers and elders play a significant role in the socialisation processes of children. Literature has highlighted the ways in which traditional patterns laid by culture and history continue to shape and affect different areas of the lives of South African Indian women today (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Mahomed, 2013; Pattundeen, 2007; Pillay et al., 2022; Schmidt & Mestry, 2021). For example, in her study on career and family, Mahomed (2013) found that when making life choices, Indian women will consider their deeply rooted cultural identities and values. However, Pattundeen (2007) found that despite holding conservative beliefs, there is an increasing tendency amongst Indian women to prioritise professional goals over the conventional expectation of young adults to strive towards marriage. This again highlights the push and pull between different familial and career roles and those values socialised by culture, history, religion and gender (Mahomed, 2013). Although there are definite issues with the generalisability of these findings, it does point to the important idea that "No identity work is performed outside of the multiple social categories in which individuals are positioned" (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016, p.274). Berlein (2021) thoroughly discusses examples of this in her personal accounts of discrimination faced as a woman, coupled by her own difficulties navigating these experiences as a mixed-race individual who identifies with a South African Indian heritage. This also speaks to the importance of considering the intersectional positioning of South African Indian women both within their own racial and ethnic communities and within the unspoken hierarchies in broader South African society mediated by gender and race.

This study sought to explore how patterns of identity persist, converge and diverge across generations. Seedat-Khan (2012) asserts that when seeking to understand the identity of Indian women in South Africa, two main viewpoints must be considered. Firstly, the individual perspective which encompasses the lived, social experiences in South Africa and secondly, the experiences and life histories of those women who came before them. This approach engages with "the significance of our roots, both physical and historical, as well as of the role of other people in shaping who one is" (Marchetti-Mercer, 2006, p.197).

2.6 Transgenerational Family Theory

For the proposed study, transgenerational (also referred to as multigenerational or intergenerational) family theory was used as a theoretical framework. Used in family therapy, this theory draws on techniques and approaches from various theorists to track, explore and understand behavioural and psychological material of families across generations (Lieberman, 1979). Skowron and Farrar (2015) note an important difference between transgenerational theory and other theories of psychology which also highlight the idea that parental figure(s) pass on dysfunctional and adaptive patterns of behaviour to the child. Transgenerational theory goes beyond the parent-child relationship in that it views all family members, past and present, as integral parts of a larger, interconnected psychological network (Skowron & Farrar, 2015). Patterns of behaviour are passed down and inherited, continuing and compounding, even if not always in a deterministic way (Scabini & Manzi, 2011; Skowron & Farrar, 2015). Family beliefs, values, norms, expectations and roles are seen as deeply rooted within family legacies and become unconscious and habitual ways of being for members of that system (Rovers, 2004). Furthermore, new generations are socialised according to these family legacies, which create templates and ways of existing in the world that are desired and acceptable within the family social context (Lieberman, 1979). To fully explore the complexities of how this occurs, it is useful to consider Bowen's Family Systems

Theory and his understanding regarding the reciprocal interactions between the self and the family as a multi-generational network.

2.6.1 Introduction to Bowen's Family Systems Theory (BFST)

Murray Bowen, an American psychiatrist and family therapist is well-known for his development of Family Systems Theory. Bowen, originally trained in psychoanalytic theory, found that the individual focus of psychoanalysis did not account for or offer a language to describe the phenomena that unfolded in family therapy when faced with the individual within a relationship system (Bowen, 1978). He wanted to hold onto the clinical underpinnings of psychoanalytic theory, which spoke to the importance of parental figures in shaping the individual (Bowen, 1978). However, Bowen believed this pathologised the behaviour of the parents as part of uncovering the 'roots' of the problem (Bowen, 1978). Instead of seeing the individual as a product of their family, Bowen saw the individual as a segment of a larger family system (Bowen, 1978). This system is comprised of interactions and interpersonal dynamics that exist between members and span across generations (Bowen, 1978).

Bowen used the word 'system' to describe certain core assumptions regarding his understanding of the family (Bowen, 1978). Firstly, he posited the view of the family existing as a number of different kinds of systems (Bowen, 1978). He saw the family as a social, cultural, communication and biological system (Bowen, 1978). This speaks to the multi-layered meanings and implications for the family unit within various social spheres and environments. Secondly, Bowen believed that dynamics within a family operated similarly to a system hoping to maintain a particular sense of equilibrium (Bowen, 1978). In other words, a change in one part of the family is followed by a compensatory action or shift in another part of the system. To account for the complexities and consequences of this action-reaction process, he framed the family as a set of numerous, smaller systems and subsystems

(Titelman, 2014). These subdivisions of the family were viewed by Bowen as being characterised by relationship dynamics between particular sets of members (Titelman, 2014). He understood this using the idea of emotions as forces that influence and shape the ways that relationships within the family system and subsystems are expressed (Titelman, 2014). At its extreme, Bowen introduced the notion of the 'undifferentiated family ego mass' to describe a dysfunctional state of emotional oneness that links members of a family and makes it difficult for individuals within the system to express any feelings that may oppose this (Bowen, 1978).

2.6.1.1 Differentiation of Self (DoS)

A central concept within Bowen's family therapy framework, differentiation of self is defined as "the process by which a person manages individuality and togetherness in a relationship" (Rovers, 2004, p.42). It is useful to consider the idea of the undifferentiated family ego mass in relation to Bowen's concept of the differentiation as self, presented as a healthier process and state of being in relation to one's family (Titelman, 2014). Bowen frames these two concepts as existing on two extremes of a spectrum and being associated with varying degrees of ego fusion within individuals in families (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). For example, an individual with a low level of differentiation, and thus a high level of ego fusion with their family may struggle to separate their own thoughts, feelings and opinions from other members within their family system (Rovers, 2004). In terms of their personal identities, these individuals may struggle to maintain a clear sense of self in relation to their families because of the strong sense of relational enmeshment present (Rovers, 2004). They are thus likely to automatically adopt the values and goals of the family system as part of their individual identity, rather than doing so in an intentional manner characterised by personal meaning and clarity (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Rovers, 2004). In contrast, an individual with a high level of differentiation is able to form personal convictions, thoughts and

opinions in a self-reflective manner, while still maintaining a connection to their family and their self-in-relation to their family (Rovers, 2004).

Family Systems Theory frames the state of being differentiated as an ideal, linking it to the ability of the individual to successfully regulate their emotions and to navigate challenging interpersonal situations (Calatrava et al., 2022). The theory posits that a well-differentiated individual is able to engage in a functional manner with others because of their capacity to maintain a degree of emotional objectivity and reflexivity (Calatrava et al., 2022). However, Bowen (1978) also notes that high levels of ego fusion within families are also linked to a collective sense of ego strength, which binds families and can offer a sense of support and emotional security during times of stress. This implies that the individual within an undifferentiated system is exposed to a range of emotionally intense experiences, ranging from negative, shared periods of distress to close, interconnected moments of comfort and safety (Bowen, 1978). This extreme contrast links to the dual forces that Bowen (1978) believed to be at the centre of differentiation. He explained that individuals have both a drive towards individuality, autonomy and independence, while at the same time experiencing the innate, human need for togetherness, belonging and connection to a group (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Thus, Skowron and Farrar (2015) note the strong internal and interpersonal aspects involved in differentiation processes. Furthermore, Bowen states that being able to navigate the complex push-and-pull forces associated with differentiation is linked to emotional maturity and health (Titelman, 2014). He believed that this is passed down by parents to children within family systems through what he termed the ‘multigenerational transmission process’ (Titelman, 2014).

2.6.1.2 Multigenerational Transmission Process

The multigenerational transmission process is based on the idea that the "level of differentiation of self in the family is transmitted across generations of the family" (Skowron & Farrar, 2015, p.168). Thus, "Each person's level of differentiation is reflected not only in his/her individual functioning, but also in the functioning of his/her nuclear family" (Klever, 2005, p.254). This is based on the assertion that a child who develops in an emotionally-charged and undifferentiated family (where decision-making is clouded and driven by intense feelings and instinct) is likely to become entangled in this family process (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen believed that although most children continue at the same level as the previous generation, there are also different factors that can affect whether an individual emerges with a higher or lower level of differentiation than their parents (Calatrava et al., 2022). For example, in a home with more than one child, the child who is most enmeshed with their parents is likely to be less differentiated than their parents (Calatrava et al., 2022). In addition, the nature of a child's relationship with their parents, nuclear family and extended family system is also based on what Bowen called one's functioning position within the family (Titelman, 2014). According to this, patterns across generations, related to factors such as birth order and gender, affect how new children born into the family are socialised (Titelman, 2014) Secondly, an individual's functioning position is also shaped by nodal events within the family's history, for example, family migration, divorce, death or illness (Titelman, 2014). Depending on the nature of these variables, particular emotional needs are generated within the family system, subsequently creating certain functions to be fulfilled by its members (Titelman, 2014). Kerr and Bowen (1988) state that "when one individual performs functions, other individuals will not perform them" (p.315). This highlights the significant nature of one's functioning role in establishing their positioning and sense of self in relation to the family system. Additionally, it is noted that as one's functioning position

shapes the development of their personality, one's personality also influences the nature of their functioning (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This in turn re-defines the nature and characteristics associated with the functioning position itself within the nuclear and broader family system. This again speaks to how patterns of behaviour in families are passed down and transformed by different individuals across generations. Keeping the link between functioning position and differentiation in mind, the multigenerational transmission process also operates on the assumption that an individual will select a life partner with the same level of differentiation as their own (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). These two individuals then become the central creators of the emotional landscape within their new nuclear family and their children are born into and inevitably shaped by this environment (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

2.6.2 Individual and family identity within socio-cultural-political contexts

Bowen (1978) stated that the concept of differentiation is an instinctual and natural process experienced by every human being, and thus applying to all individuals across cultures and social contexts. However, literature has critiqued this, noting the lack of evidence testing the universal nature of Bowen's claims (Erdem & Safi, 2018). Additionally, it has been suggested that BFST needs to be adapted and anchored within different social and cultural contexts, rather than the theory's concepts presented as existing independently of these. For example, Erdem and Safi (2018) suggest that individual's lived experiences involving religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability and social class be viewed as fundamental forces that mediate family systems. McGoldrick et al. (2006) echo this, stating that comprehensively understanding family processes and dynamics involves contextualising the unit within social, cultural, economic, and political environments. Additionally, Markus and Kitayama (1991) draw attention to the importance of this considering that most psychological theory is grounded in Western views of the self and how this exists in relation to the other. This is seen when considering culture-specific notions of the self.

When examining culture, various studies have cited the 'individualist-collectivist' spectrum as a core factor that shapes both individual, family values and subsequent intergenerational patterns (Erdem & Safi, 2018; Gharehbaghy, 2011; Narayanan & Sriram, 2022; Rodríguez-González et al., 2020; Skowron, 2004). For example, Chadda and Deb (2013) note that Indian society promotes collectivist values which emphasise interdependence, social cohesion and the prioritising of group over individual interests. These beliefs are reflected within and retained by the family system, a primary site of transmission and transformation of values (Chadda & Deb, 2013). Thus, Erdem and Safi (2018) note that in collectivistic cultures, an individual's emotional functioning is mediated more by self-other relations, versus what is found in individualistic cultures whereby there are clearer boundaries between the self and other. Reflecting on this in the context of BFST and differentiation, Kim et al. (2014, p.263) suggest that "for cultures in which tight-knit families are revered, perhaps the Western mislabel of fusion may be needed to be replaced by something more akin to concepts that denotes collaborative health, such as solidarity." This highlights the importance of considering culture-specific ways to characterise and understand differentiation of self and the associated subjective measures of emotional wellness within a family system (Erdem & Safi, 2018). Furthermore, since both cultural values and levels of differentiation have strong intergenerational components, it is pivotal that these be considered as part of understanding both the individual and their family context.

Exploring the influence of past generations on the present provides therapists with insight into current patterns of family functioning (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). McGoldrick et al. (2006) state that a common focus of therapy involves helping an individual make meaning of who they are in relation to their close relationships, community, and family legacy. For example, an important part of identity formation involves evaluating and making conscious decisions about whether ethnic and family values resonate or fit with our self-concepts and

personal belief systems (McGoldrick et al., 2006). According to Scabini and Manzi (2011) the manner in which an individual disassociates or integrates different aspects of their family identity is significant. Through this process, the individual acquires a unique position and role in their family history as their decisions inform a vital link which either disrupts or continues the transmission of particular patterns (Scabini & Manzi, 2011).This may also impact an individual's sense of belonging within the family system (McGoldrick et al., 2006; Scabini & Manzi, 2011). For example, this differentiation of self-identity may lead to a hybrid consciousness in which the individual feels both separated and connected to their family of origin (Williamson & Bray, 1988).

2.6.3 Family, community and the shaping of identity

Extensive research on the development and transmission of cultural and ethnic identity within families has been conducted within various communities worldwide. Various theoretical models illustrate the different factors that influence the processes of ethnic socialisation for adolescents within families (Knight et al., 1993; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Nuances within findings of studies often vary depending on perceived cultural values unique to the population group being studied and how these influence the meanings attributed to the concept of ethnic identity. For example, Kiang and Fuligni (2009) found that within a group of youths of Latin American and Asian origins, identification with the ethnic group of their family was linked to a sense of respect and obligation for previous generations. They contextualise these findings within the understanding that these cultural groups were more likely to encourage the prioritising of the needs of the family above one's personal needs and to socialise children according to 'other-focused' values such as loyalty and dutifulness. Similarly, within a population of second-generation Chinese adolescents in Canada, Costigan et al. (2009) found that parental expectations regarding the importance of ethnic identity greatly affected the extent to which this was valued by children. They discuss their findings

by distinguishing between the different roles played by mothers and fathers in modelling different aspects of cultural identity for younger generations. This study also found that immigrant mothers were more invested in preserving culture and passing this on to their children. This is an interesting finding which has also been echoed by other authors, reflecting a link between gender role expectations and the transmission of culture (Glassman & Eisikovits, 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Nguyen et al. (2015) argue that the experience of culture for the individual and how this is often mediated by gender is an additional consideration when examining the subjective value assigned to ethnic identity. For example, they found that amongst Asian American college students, ethnic socialisation experiences within families were linked to well-being more strongly in males compared to females. The authors propose that this may be because of gendered child-rearing practices often mediated by culture. For example, girls are raised in a stricter, more rigid manner compared to boys who are allowed greater levels of freedom and independence (Nguyen et al., 2015). These findings reflect that ethnic socialisation within families is a varied process rooted in intersectional positioning within various social categories. Furthermore, this work encourages the importance of a research approach that considers the context and distinct characteristics of participant populations to fully explore the richness and nuances of cultural experience within families.

2.6.4 Understandings of family within the South African Indian population

Family has played an important role in the lives of South African Indians since the arrival of the first Indian migrants in the country. Khan (2012) explains this further, highlighting the important transition in Indian family life that occurred following the period of indenture. In 1911 the Indian government put a stop to the system of indenture (Vahed, 2019). Diesel (2007, p.1) states that this was "largely in response to a public outcry in India about conditions encountered by fellow compatriots in South Africa." For individuals who

settled in Natal, most Indian families shared homes with extended members on properties jointly owned by males in the family (Khan, 2012). Morris and Kuper (1961, p.15) state that during this time, the family was reestablished to become "the main social unit of Indian life, the center in which the individual received his foundation in social values and behaviour. Pillay (2017a) highlights the important flow of information between government policies and the impact of these on and transmission of these through the family system to individuals. For example, Jagganath (2012) notes that the small sizes of the houses allocated during the establishment of the Group Areas Act forced many Indian families to shift from living with traditional extended family systems to limiting living situations to the nuclear family. These impacts then shape discourses which are adopted and assigned meanings by individuals who then use these to form identifications as part of understandings of the self and the family in relation to the social and political spheres in the country (Pillay, 2017a).

Khan (2012) asserts that research on South African Indians is often based on various cohorts of individuals that differ in terms of family migration history, class, and language. She argues that these factors all affect familial and individual understandings of what it means to identify and express one's sense of being Indian in South Africa and is linked to previous generations and the transmission of customs and values. For example, in a study focused on middle-class Indian parents from Durban, Singh (2002) found stricter forms of social control exercised on children related to family obligations and academics. With this being said, literature has also drawn attention to common threads linking different constructions of family among groups of South African Indians. For example, Boshoff (2011) found that the idea of family, duty and a need to maintain family values were a common theme in discussions with young South African Indians about familial connections. However, it is also important to note Khan's (2012) point, who draws attention to the fact that studies involving South African Indian families have often neglected the experiences of mixed-race

families, single-parent, and same-sex parent households. Thus, she references that in the past, there was a clearer cut 'norm' associated with Indian families that is now being diverted by newer and broader definitions of family within the South African context.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on the intricacies of the identity construction of South African Indian individuals with a particular focus on how this is shaped by both the socio-political context of the country and the family system. This literature review has found that while the lives of South African Indian individuals have shifted in many ways since the arrival of their ancestors in this country, there are also defining aspects of their identity that have persisted and have been passed down across generations. According to the literature, women have been found to play a fundamental role in the upholding of these cultural legacies within families. The identities of South African Indian women are laden with tensions as they navigate the patriarchal underpinnings of their identified culture and ethnic group while also making sense of their intersectional positionings within the various social hierarchies in the broader country. While it has been briefly outlined in the literature, there have been no studies which comprehensively explore the identity construction of South African Indian women. Thus, this research aims to shed light on this topic by providing a snapshot of the identities of young South African Indian women today, positioned on the cusp of both the past and the present within their family legacies and in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological considerations adhered to throughout the research process. It begins by describing the research aims and stating the research questions set out at the beginning of this research study. Thereafter, it will discuss the chosen research approach and design. Next, the reasons for the chosen theoretical framework are discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the sampling used as well as the data collection and data analysis process. Factors relating to trustworthiness and ethical considerations will be discussed next. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a discussion related to researcher reflexivity.

3.1 Research aims

The overall aim of this research study was to contribute to an understanding of how transgenerational family histories influence the construction of the identity of South African Indian women.

3.2 Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- What role do transgenerational family processes play in the shaping of young Indian women's sense of identity?
- What transgenerational family stories play a role in the process of identity formation of young Indian women?
- In which ways are understandings of South African Indian female identity similar/different from previous generations?

3.3 Research approach and design

This study was conducted utilising a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research methods are used to investigate questions that focus on the experience and

perspectives of participants, rather than seeking a concrete, cause-and-effect answer (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Willig, 2008). This is because qualitative research assumes that there are "multiple versions of reality for each person" and that these are strongly shaped by contextual and personal factors (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.2). Furthermore, it is emphasised that these subjective perspectives are constantly in change and that qualitative research thus captures the feelings, experiences and internal worlds of participants at a particular point in time (Fossey et al., 2002). Thus, rather than being aimed at generalisability and quantifiability, it strives towards depth of understanding of specific concepts and phenomena within particular settings (Fossey et al., 2002). Levitt et al. (2017) states that qualitative research is often suited to psychological studies because of their usefulness in creating an understanding of unique and nuanced dimensions of the human experience. Ganong and Coleman (2014) state that qualitative research is useful when conducting research that enquires about family processes and dynamics. This is because qualitative research yields data that provides the researcher with rich, comprehensive understandings of what it is like to be a member of the participants' family system (Ganong & Coleman, 2014). This is important for this study, as qualitative inquiry allowed for an in-depth exploration into the subjective and personal nature of both individual and family identities.

3.4 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is defined as the application of a theory in a study that offers a lens through which the researcher processes and interprets new knowledge (Collins & Stockton, 2018). It is noted that the chosen theoretical framework reflects the basic principles and components that underpin the study at hand (Collins & Stockton, 2018). As mentioned in the literature review chapter, this study utilised Transgenerational Family Theory with a focus on Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory (BFST). Haefner (2014) states that application of Bowenian theory is especially useful when investigating and comparing

patterns of behaviour across multiple generations of a family system. BFST was deemed useful in understanding the findings of this study because of the theory's focus on identity development through the concept of differentiation. Furthermore, this theory highlights individual identity formation in relation to previous generations within a family and was thus aligned with the study's focus on transgenerational patterns of identity development.

3.5 Sample

Research participants in the study consisted of young adult (between the ages of 18-25) female students from the University of Witwatersrand who identify as South African Indians. These students originated from Johannesburg, Durban, Pietermaritzburg or Pretoria. Identifying students within this age range allows for an exploration of contemporary identity, focusing on third and fourth-generation South African Indian women. University students from the Department of Psychology were chosen because of their accessibility to the researcher. A non-probability purposive sampling method was utilised. This is a non-random technique in which "the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience" (Etikan et al., 2016, p.4). When difficulty arose in finding research participants for the study, a snowball sampling method followed. This involved asking individuals who agreed to participate in the study to recommend others who fitted the research criteria and were willing participants (Parker et al., 2019). Individual interviews were conducted with eight participants. A smaller sample size allowed more time to obtain richer, thorough accounts from research participants (Kindsiko & Poltimäe, 2019; Malterud et al., 2016).

3.6 Inclusion criteria

Research participants met the following criteria:

i. Identify as a South African Indian woman

ii. Be between the ages of 18-25 years old

iii. Should be a registered student at the University of Witwatersrand

3.7 Research process and data collection method

Ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) at the University of the Witwatersrand was obtained. Clearance was granted on Protocol Number: MCLIN/22/04 (see Appendix D). Since I was working with a student sample, permission was obtained from the Deputy Registrar. Following this, I contacted year-level co-ordinators (first-third year and postgraduate students) in the department of psychology about posting a notice about the study on the university's E-Learning platform, Ulwazi. This notice included information on the purpose of the study and nature of participation was detailed in a participant information sheet (Appendix A). Willing individuals were invited to contact me via email. A time and place for the interview was then arranged to accommodate each participant. The consultation rooms in the Umthombo building (which are available to psychology Master's students) on the University of the Witwatersrand campus were suggested as a possible venue. Three of the participants opted to meet at this venue, while the remaining five indicated that they preferred to meet online, due to convenience reasons. Safety protocols linked to COVID-19 were planned, but were not required to be adhered to, due to the lifting of lockdown regulations during the time of interviews.

Upon arrival, the information sheet was given to participants to read and a discussion was had with the participant reminding them about the voluntary nature of the interview questions and that they were able to terminate the interview process immediately in the event of any discomfort arising. I also discussed with participants the potentially sensitive nature of discussions regarding family and mentioned the availability of debriefing sessions at the university psychology clinic if participants deemed it necessary after the interview process. An opportunity was allowed for participants to ask any questions related to the nature of the

study and their rights as participants to ensure ease and comfort. Participants were also reminded that the interview data would remain confidential and that pseudonyms would be used in the final write-up of results. Participants were then asked to sign an informed consent form confirming their willingness to participate and to allow for the recording of the interview (this was obtained digitally for participants who opted to meet online) (see Appendix B).

3.8 Data collection tools

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and genograms. The genogram was used as a tool to elicit information from the participants with the aid of a semi-structured interview. The genogram is a tool used to construct a visual representation of the family network (Kennedy, 2010). These usually span across at least three generations (Estrada & Haney, 1998) and provides useful information on different aspects of family relationships (such as social and emotional functioning) (Kennedy, 2010). Genograms are useful for uncovering useful information regarding recurring and pervasive transgenerational behavioural patterns and themes (Rigazio-DiGilio, 2005). Although originally used in family therapy, recent utilisations of the genogram have found it to be a useful tool in research that can enhance understandings of family relationships (Rempel et al., 2007). Genograms can help to structure interviews and provide a visual representation of the data that can be referred to by both the participant and researcher (Alexander et al., 2018). Before the interview, participants were instructed to construct a rough draft of a 'family tree,' with a focus on significant figures in their family histories (Appendix A). Variations of the genogram, such as the cultural genogram can assist in gaining additional information on the influence of culture on the family system (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995). The cultural genogram incorporates information pertaining to the influence of culture on the values, defining characteristics and generational patterns of the family system (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995). It is

structured using questions related to the impact of race, ethnicity, class and gender on intergenerational experiences within a family (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995). McGoldrick et al. (2006) remind us that there is no universal definition of the term 'family,' which always needs to be viewed contextually. For example, Western definitions of family tend to focus on the nuclear family, while many cultural groups internationally include extended family members and mention multiple generations of individuals (McGoldrick et al., 2006). The cultural genogram can also be useful for engaging with this, highlighting and exploring context-specific understandings of the meaning of family (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995). Hardy and Laszloffy (1995) initially developed the cultural genogram as a training tool for family therapists to gain greater awareness regarding the influence of culture on their respective family system. For this study, the questions in the semi-structured interview were developed in line with the guidelines of the cultural genogram (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995). Incorporating elements of the cultural genogram allowed for an understanding of how cultural elements associated with the South African Indian population intersect with individual and family identity. Furthermore, the questions related to gender were useful in highlighting intergenerational experiences specific to Indian women within the family system.

Reflecting on the use of the genogram in my research, I found that one of the main benefits of incorporating this was related to the establishing of rapport with participants. Due to the at times sensitive nature of family research, the construction of the genogram allowed the participants an opportunity to ease into the research process. I found it helpful to have had the first names of participants' family members presented in a visual format throughout the interview process. This was because participants often presented complex networks of family members and being able to refer to relatives by first names thus eased the process of tracking the lives of these individuals. Additionally, the use of the first names of family members (versus referring to them using their relationship to participant) facilitated a sense of

connection between myself and the participants and made the process feel more personal and relaxed.

Data was also collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. Smith and Osborn (2007, p.57) state that semi-structured interviews "allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise." This form of interviewing is useful for exploratory studies investigating novel, under researched topics (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Interview participants are able to introduce new dimensions to the conversation that the researcher may not have thought of, thus allowing for openness and flexibility in the data collection process (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

A pilot interview provides a way to 'test' the interview schedule to ensure that data answering the research questions is obtained from participants during the collection process (Majid et al., 2017). The first interview that was conducted served as a pilot study. Thereafter, adjustments were to be made to the interview schedule if deemed necessary. In the case of this research study, no changes were made to the interview schedule after the pilot study was conducted. I did, however, become aware of the extended length of time required to fully explore the information presented in the genogram. As a result, the genogram was utilised as a tool to springboard conversation regarding different aspects of the participants' family history, rather than being examined directly, as originally proposed.

3.9 Data analysis

The collected data was analysed by means of thematic analysis. Themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews and genograms were identified. Textual data relating to genograms was extracted from participant transcripts and thematically analysed (Alexander et al., 2018).

Thematic analysis is described as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). One of the foci of thematic analysis involves the researcher identifying meanings across a raw data set and grouping these together to highlight shared experiences amongst participant accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A thematic analysis has been selected for the proposed study because it is flexible, in that it allows the researcher the possibility of examining the data in different ways (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Additionally, thematic analysis allows for an in-depth, detailed examination of the raw data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) six identified stages of thematic analysis was used. The first phase of this process followed after the transcription of participant accounts. I familiarised myself with the data through the reading and re-reading of transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial ideas or areas of interest were noted and referred back throughout the following stages of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next, initial codes were generated. Codes are concepts and important points relevant to the research question that are later grouped together to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Once these codes were identified, I organised different codes into potential themes (both main and sub-themes) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this, themes were reviewed and refined. This process involved assessing the quality and accuracy of individual themes and then considering these in relation to the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Following this, themes were defined and labelled (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Part of this process involved identifying the main points of each theme and considering their meanings in relation to one another (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Lastly, themes were written up and collated in a report.

In terms of the analysis of genograms, I followed the recommendations made by Puhlman et al. (2023). In their proposed guidelines, Puhlman et al. (2023) use the coded themes from interview transcripts to enhance understanding of genogram data. Using this

information, genograms are analysed and compared, and potential themes related to family dynamics and relationships across generations are noted. In this study, this was especially significant due to the previously mentioned time constraints, which limited the depth of information that could be obtained during the genogram construction process. As a result, a combined approach was implemented, in which final themes were formulated and written up by integrating information from both the genogram analyses and interview data.

3.10 Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in the study, I was guided by the following dimensions as outlined by Guba (1981): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Confirmability, which relates to the objectivity and neutrality of the researcher, will be discussed in section 3.11 of this chapter which focuses on reflexivity.

Firstly, credibility is concerned with how accurately the findings of the study represent reality and truth (Shenton, 2004). To ensure that credibility was met, I utilised peer-debriefing, seeking scholarly guidance and support from my research supervisor. Peer-debriefing involves in-depth discussions with an impartial peer or academic relating to the process of investigating research findings (Spall, 1998). Anney (2014) states that peer-debriefing offers a way for researchers to test their developing insights and thoughts on the data, and to minimise bias.

Transferability refers to "the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents" (Anney, 2014, p.277). I have provided detailed descriptions of interpretations of research findings, supported by direct quotes from participants' accounts. Polit and Beck (2018) suggest that this allows individuals interested in transferring research findings with adequate information to be able to form their own conclusions about whether research findings are generalisable to a particular population.

Dependability involves whether similar findings would be obtained if the same study were replicated using the same participants and methods (Shenton, 2004). I have ensured this by using the audit trail technique. This method involves the researcher clearly outlining all steps involved in the research process as well as thorough explanations of all methodological choices and interpretations.

3.11 Ethical considerations

The main ethical concerns of the proposed study are as follows:

Ensuring procedural ethics: According to Tracy (2010, p.847), procedural ethics as "ethical actions dictated as universally necessary by larger organisations, institutions or governing bodies." These are required to protect participants from unnecessary risks resulting from their involvement in the research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). To ensure that these standards are met, I presented the proposed study to the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-Medical) which had to approve the research before the study could commence .

Obtaining voluntary participation: Voluntary participation is linked to the ethical principle of autonomy, ensuring that individuals are able to make independent decisions regarding their involvement in the research (Steinke, 2004). Voluntary participation was communicated to the participants both in the participant information sheet (see Appendix A) and verbally before the interview. The right to withdraw from the study at any point, without the risk of negative consequences, was also communicated to potential participants.

Obtaining informed consent: Informed consent is related to the ethical principle of human dignity. For participants to give informed consent, they must have a clear understanding of the research objectives and their role in how these will be met (Stevens & Pletsch, 2002). The informed consent form (see Appendix B) was presented to the

participants prior to data collection. Written consent to record the interview was requested from each participant.

Ensuring confidentiality: According to Ethicist (2015), confidentiality speaks to two ethical principles of research, namely, 'beneficence' and 'respect for persons'. 'Respect for persons' is practiced by notifying participants of the measures that will be used to protect their personal data, and then strictly upholding this promise (Ethicist, 2015). Confidentiality was ensured through the storing of data on a password-encrypted laptop, with only myself and my supervisor having access. To ensure anonymity of research participants, pseudonyms have been used in the final research report. Anonymised interview transcripts were stored securely by the research supervisor for future secondary data analysis.

Protecting the participants: Doing no harm and ensuring the protection of research participants must inform every decision made throughout the research process (Stevens & Pletsch, 2002). Interview data was stored securely throughout the research process on a password-encrypted laptop. To ensure the safety of the participants and the researcher, the COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidelines as outlined by the (Department of Health, 2020) were planned to be strictly adhered to during the data collection process. However, due to the lifting of lockdown restrictions, this was deemed as no longer being necessary during the data collection process.

There were no foreseeable risks with the study, but in the unlikely event of the participant experiencing distress, a list of free counselling service providers was to be provided (see Appendix A).

3.12 Reflexivity

Merriam (2002) highlights the subjective nature of qualitative research, framing the researcher as a central tool in the data collection and data analysis processes. An advantage of

this is that the researcher is able to maximise their understanding of interview material by guiding the direction of interviews, probing unexpected conversation topics and clarifying with participants to ensure the accuracy of interpretation (Merriam, 2002). However, this also raises questions of bias, which Merriam (2002) states is vital for researchers to reflect on as part of monitoring the impact of this in shaping the different aspects of the research process. Furthermore, Shenton (2004) states that researcher reflexivity is essential to ensuring confirmability and reliability of research findings.

Breen (2007) states that it is important for researchers within the social sciences to be aware of their personal motivation for choosing to undertake research studies. To conceptualise this in relation to my individual involvement in this study, I have reflected on the importance of insider and outsider positions. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that researchers occupy an insider position when they identify with participants in a way that informs a sense of shared group identity (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Since I identify as an Indian female, I anticipated that I would inevitably identify with the research participants of this study in some way or another. I was also aware of the possibility that I would relate to certain life experiences based on factors relating to shared ethnic, cultural or gender identities. In addition to this, I was aware of the impact of my own experiences and feelings related to my South African Indian identity in prompting the choosing of this as a research topic. On the other hand, I also held in mind the idea that in many ways, I would also identify myself and be perceived as an outsider by research participants. Breen (2007) states that due to our multiple social identities and the overlap or lack thereof that this may share with participants, it is impossible to conclusively position oneself as either fully ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the research study. Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) expand on this idea by highlighting the dynamic and intangible nature of social identities as well as the challenge of knowing which aspects of our social identity are more influential at different points in time. An example of this that

arose during the data collection related to class. I recorded my research interviews using an Apple MacBook Air, providing the participant with a sense of my financial means, something that may have been potentially alienating to participants from a different social class than myself.

Sirkeci et al. (2019) provide an example of how being perceived as an insider by participants may help establish rapport during the research process. I experienced this during the data collection process as participants seemed to identify with me based on our shared identities as South African Indian women. Josselson (2013) highlights the important role of the interviewer in determining the kind of information that is produced during the interview. Participants create and tell certain stories according to their experiences of who we are and how we respond to them (Josselson, 2013). In this way, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee becomes the context within which participant accounts are constructed, as this influences "what is tellable and how it will be told" (Josselson, 2013, p.11). Thus, the relationship between participants and I was vital to hold in mind throughout the interview process, as they may have assumed that I understand or 'know what it is like' based on our perceived similarities. Interview skills such as maintaining neutrality while encouraging the participant with verbal and non-verbal cues were essential to encourage the production of authentic and rich personal accounts (Josselson, 2013; Scârneci-Domnişoru, 2013).

Shenton (2004) states that researchers must be cognisant of the possibility that their preferences and biases may skew research findings to match their experiences, rather than the realities of the participants. To guard against this, I kept a reflexive journal to document and consciously acknowledge any struggles or personal challenges experienced throughout the process (Ortlipp, 2008). Additionally, this was used to reflect on and engage with my own

experiences related to gender, race, family and identity. The following excerpt from my reflexive journal provides an example of this:

> *Maymoonah walked into the interview venue and responded to my greeting with a soft-spoken, "Hello." She wore a long-sleeved tunic layered over a tracksuit pants with a hijab covering her head. Immediately certain descriptors came to mind as I made snap judgements and boxed Maymoonah as modest, quiet, traditional. I imagined her as the kind of Indian daughter who carried the social and religious traditions of her parents without question or doubt; in other words, the kind of Indian daughter who was very different to me. I found myself pre-empting the kind of interview responses I imagined that I would receive from her and wondered about this. As the interview progressed, I was surprised to find out that amongst the women in her family, she was one of the first to defy the norms of what was considered 'modest' through her wearing of pants, a typically masculine dress option. She also wore the hijab following her own decision to do so and detailed her many years grappling with this, navigating a wish to find personal purpose and a reason to continue the dressing patterns of previous generations. I felt a sense of shame afterward, having assumed character traits about this woman based on her appearance. I had judged Maymoonah according to the standards within my own mind about what a 'modern' woman looks like based on my own personal and familial experiences. Additionally, I had also assumed her differences and similarities to previous generations within her family based on my own biases and stereotypes regarding Islam and the associated assumptions I had regarding womanhood.*

The above journal entry reflects a point made by Dwyer and Buckle (2009). They state that for researchers who identify themselves as insiders, his or her membership status in relation to participants is a vital aspect of the study that needs to be continuously reflected on.

This is because individuals engaging in insider research need to be aware of their positioning as both researcher and researched (Chavez, 2008). Maintaining awareness of my similarities and differences with participants and how I experienced these was an important aspect towards ensuring that the presented research findings reflected the perspectives and views of participants, rather than my own.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodological considerations followed throughout the research process. The results obtained during the data collection process will be presented and expanded upon in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the major themes that were obtained from the analysis of the interview data, as guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process and the genogram analysis. The main themes identified from the interview and genogram data were as follows: **1) The Different Meanings Assigned to the Concept of 'Family,' 2) Significant Relatives in Participants' Lives, 3) The Role of Indian Women in the Family System, 4) Intergenerational Differences Between Indian Women in Family Systems 5) The Role of Culture in Identity Formation, 6) Balancing Family Expectations: Differentiation Versus Belonging.** These themes, along with their associated subthemes, will be discussed below.

Summary of themes and subthemes:	
1) The Different Meanings Assigned to the Concept 'Family'	**1.1 Connection Between Family Members** **1.2 Provision of Emotional Support and Guidance**
2) Significant Relatives in Participants' Lives	**2.1 Important Relatives in Participants' Lives and/or Family Histories** **2.2 Participants' Identification With Significant Relatives**
3) The Role of Indian Women in the Family System	**3.1 Shared Commonalities** **3.2 Outliers in Terms of Traditional Family Roles**

4) Intergenerational Differences Between Indian Women in Family Systems	**4.1 Factors Shaping Participants' Identifications as Indian Women** **4.2 Participants' Perceived Points of Differentiation Within Family Systems**
5) The Role of Culture in Identity Formation	**5.1 Values Attached to Indian Culture** **5.2 The Role of Religion in Shaping Identity**
6) Balancing Family Expectations: Differentiation Versus Belonging	**6.1 Setting up Boundaries** **6.2 Valuing and Respecting the Family System**

1) The Different Meanings Assigned to the Concept of Family

This theme presents the broad ways that participants defined the concept of family as well as their understanding of the functions of the family, regarding the role that their families play in their lives. Most participants referenced emotive concepts of care, love, and connection that they associated with the idea of family. For many participants, one's family was also associated with those who have one's best interests at heart and who act as trusted providers of emotional support and guidance. This will be discussed in the subthemes below.

1.1 Connection Between Family Members

The majority of participants referenced ideas related to connection, love and care as part of their understanding of family. Araya described her experience of family as: "*Having connection regardless of whether you speak about things or not*." Descriptions of family were also based on the emotional quality and experience of the participants' relationships with their family members. For example, Tasneem mentioned: "*When I think about the word family, I think about people that I love*." Muneerah echoed this, stating that: "*It's (family) something that grounds me. Like I feel as though if I never had such a close family, I would be lost*." Similarly, Aziza also referred to the subjective element attached to one's understanding of family, stating: "*I think it (includes) the people who are not only related to you, but who actually care about you, and you care about them.*"

1.2 Provision of Emotional Support and Guidance

Several participants connected the concept of family to functions related to support and guidance. Aaminah noted that a family includes individuals who are: "*Always there for you, people that you can rely on and people that would have your back no matter what."* Similarly, Araya mentioned: "*They play a really important role, they motivate me. And it's just like I always know I have back up or people to go back to and people that won't judge me and stuff*." Ayesha noted the consistent nature of support received in the family while also touching on the reciprocal nature of this: "*You'll still stick by them and persevere… you still love them regardless of anything*." Jaymala spoke to the idea of family as a source of guidance, noting that: "*I think it's like your foundation. It teaches you a lot about life.*" Similarly, Aaminah highlighted the influential nature of the family: "*I mean, it is what influences you, even though it might be subconscious, and you don't know it, but they do shape you in a way that you realise like way afterwards.*" Tasneem spoke about her family experiences as part of shaping who she is, highlighting the important role that her conflict

with her family has played in teaching her specific life lessons: "*So my brother and my father are very strict with me and I guess I learnt lessons from that. I didn't like it then, but it's actually formed a big part of who I am now*."

2) Significant Relatives in Participants' Lives

This theme highlights women whom participants identified as having a significant impact on their lives and/or their family history. Many participants identified these relatives based on an admiration of personal qualities, a position of influence within the broader family system, or an understanding of the positive influence the individual has in shaping and affirming their own sense of identity. Additionally, with the aid of the genogram participants were asked to describe their shared values with these individuals and their reasons for identifying with these relatives. This provided a sense of how participants positioned themselves in relation to their understandings of their broader family values.

2.1 Important Relatives in Participants' Lives and/or Family Histories

Many of the participants listed their mothers as an important figure in their lives. Araya mentioned her understanding of her mother's role within their family system: "*My mom is significant because she's the glue of the family."* She also highlights her mother in relation to the role of her and her siblings within their family. Referencing their family's history of domestic violence, she referenced the sense of obligation felt towards her mother, stating that she is also considered significant because : "*We've (Araya and her siblings) always had to protect her."* Tasneem highlighted her perceived similarity to her mother, noting: "*I think she's a big part of who I am in the sense we're very alike.*"

Certain participants listed either their maternal or paternal grandmother(s) as significant to both them and/or to their family history. Araya mentioned the personal qualities of her grandmother that she describes both herself and other family members appreciating,

stating: "*She was just really warm and inviting. Her house was always open to anybody, like whether they wanted to talk, or just visit."*

Sheetal highlights her the important role her grandmother played in shaping her self-image:

> "*My naani (grandmother), she's very body positive, which is very nice because I'm not a very skinny person, so it's nice to see that she doesn't really shame me about it, she embraces it."*

Muneerah experienced her grandmother as an important link to her family history, carrying stories from her paternal family's past, stating: "*I chose her, mostly with relation to my family history. I feel as though if I never had her, I wouldn't know anything about my dad's family."* This speaks to the significant role that her grandmother plays as a carrier of family stories and as a connection between the past and present in Muneerah's family. Tasneem, describing her paternal grandmother's activism during apartheid, highlights her admiration for her grandmother's will, noting: "*It's just like the drive she had for her cause, for what she believed was right in life was so strong."* She also emphasised the importance of her maternal grandmother in her life, stating*: "She is also wise and questioning norms that are put into place for Indian girls."*

Certain participants mentioned older female relatives as significant to them. Sheetal highlighted the important role her sister plays in terms of emotional support: "*What makes her important to me is that she always reminds me who I am, and she also reminds me to calm down in situations because I'm more like anxious."* Similarly, Muneerah highlighted the important role her older cousin's more independent values and non-conformity to gender roles have played in fostering a sense of emotional connection and resonance*: "She is one of the only people that I can actually relate to in many ways."* Lastly, Tasneem mentioned how because her aunt is perceived as different to other family members, she is experienced

positively by younger generations in the family*:"With my mom's sister…she's like the cool aunt, so I guess we're all very close to her in that sense."*

2.2 Participants' Identifications With Significant Relatives

In terms of women in their families, participants expressed that they identified with certain relatives for reasons related to shared personality traits and/or similar values such as independence, respect, gentleness, and kindness. Aziza referenced her commonalities with her mother in the manner that they relate to people: "*The way my mother treats people, I feel like I'm the same as her."* Sheetal spoke about the shared interests that connect her to her sister, noting, "*My sister and I were very artistic people. As much as we do academics, it's sometimes because we have to. But we do like artistic things."* Aaminah noted how both she and her family perceive her as identifying with her aunt because of shared physical and personal attributes*: "If there's one person that they (Aaminah's family) always mock me about and they say, "You're just like you're like her, both looks wise and like personality."*

Araya describes the personality traits she feels she has in common with her grandmother as well as how this shapes her interpersonal interactions with both family members and others in her life:

> "*I'm very similar to my grandmothers, both of them. I think my personality, like my humour, my sarcasm…In this grandmother (maternal), was more the being gentle and the way in which you carry yourself is really important. And I think the values like the values that I have now stem from her…. Both my grandmothers are kind but, but like that's where I learnt it from. being kind to others no matter where they come from. Your home is always open, always willing to help. And just that family is important, but so are you. That kind of independence she, she brought out my more independent side*."

Jaymala believed she is most similar to her older cousin because she believed they experienced similar struggles related to race, location, culture and societal boundaries:

> "*Sarishka she needed to juggle a lot by herself. When she was 18, she lived by herself, she worked by herself. And now she's like an accountant and she's doing very well. Also, I identify with that because I used to think I couldn't go beyond Durban like I thought that when I was younger, like I just want to live here (Durban). And then when I moved to Jo'burg also, like, there's so much more to life. Like just being around different races…. because I didn't grow up around like Indian, like my peers weren't majority Indian, when I was growing up in Joburg and I loved it. And Sarishka also like she dated interracially and stuff, which I have done. And that's why I identify with her, and I just love like how she made something of herself from nothing, and she didn't care."*

Ayesha spoke about different aspects of the self, her personal goals and how she believes she and her sister to be similar because of these shared qualities: "*I think, yeah, like we both have that personality where like we want to do better and like incorporate like our education, but then also like follow our religion*."

3) The Role of Indian Women in the Family System

This theme presents the broad roles that Indian women both do and are expected to fulfil within their families. This is seen when examining the shared experiences that link generations of Indian women within participants' family systems, both in the data analysis of interviews as well as the analysis of the genograms. Additionally, women who did not fit into these expected roles and the social repercussions and consequences of this within their families will be discussed.

3.1 Shared Commonalities

Personal attributes and characteristics were listed as common threads that link together women in their families. Firstly, this included more traditional roles such as women's ability to keep the family together and to provide and care through guidance and activities such as cooking. Secondly, values such as independence and a wish for self-sustainability outside of the supports of their families were highlighted.

Several participants listed the importance of caring and providing for the family as part of the commonalities between women in their family. Participants described these acts as being underpinned by feelings of obligation and duty within their families. Sheetal mentioned that in her family: "*Women are often like expected to do everything to know everything to, like, keep the family together*." In terms of familial duties, she also noted that: "*raising children often falls on the mother."* She also linked the responsibilities of women within her family to a sense of pressure: *"Anxiety is something I've noticed with women in my family, a lot of like anxiety to be the one who like holds everything together."* Similarly, Araya also spoke to the struggles that women in her family had experienced related to their roles within the family: *"They were all put through a lot and had to deal with a lot in, especially in terms of like keeping the household together, that was the main role that they played, it was creating a home."* Tasneem also referenced the strength and drive she believed the women in her family needed to manage the pressures of different roles. For example, speaking about her mother she said*: "So she's working in corporate and doing that and I see how much it takes out of her and she just carries on doing it because she wants to do it. She has the drive to do it while still taking care of; all of us."* Aziza noted a similar emphasis on care amongst the women within her family: "*All of them would always prioritise their kids over everything if that makes sense like. They always try to see to their family before everything else*."

Muneerah, describing her grandmother's role in the family, explained how other members of her family have responded positively to her and view her as a significant figure and matriarch within the system. She then notes that this is a role she aspires towards, suggesting that the shaping of her sense of self within her family is influenced by how other women in the family are perceived and received by the system: *"Everyone seems to look up to her… she is a motherly figure for everyone.. something I (also) wish to do…."*

Jaymala described the women in her family as needing to be attentive and attuned to the needs of their husbands and their families. She compares these women to her mother and the marriage between her parents, and in doing so communicates her opinion and position regarding who she hopes to be in her future romantic relationship:

> *"Like romantic relationships, I used to think that you could be consumed in them because that's what like marriages look like from like when I grew up. I saw the wives always catering to the husband. But my parents are individuals still and have shown me that your individual goals (can) make you a better person in your relationships."*

The close link between the preparation of food and the role of women was also noted across several participants. Sheetal noted that the responsibility of women to prepare food is often unspoken within her family: *"Even with the cooking and stuff, something as simple as that, it often just falls on the woman. No one really questions it."* Muneerah echoed a similar sentiment: "*You're practically the maid in the family. That's what everyone seems to be."* She then explained how a woman who does more than fulfil these expected roles is uncommon within her family and something that she admires because of this*: "That's why I always look up to Fahmeda because she's not just a person that's always cooking. She's working too and doing her own thing besides just being a cook and a mother."*

Jaymala expressed the emotional meaning that food carries when prepared by the women in her family, noting that: "*I don't like my parents cooking. I don't like their cooking at all. But my family in Durban, their cooking is like home. I don't like curry if parents make it, but it's like such a memory when it comes from Durban."* She also references the idea of women and food as an expression of love and care:

> *"Well, for example I think the way that of my family cooked showed also how far they'll go for you.... I feel like the cooking shows care, for example, when we go to Durban, if I ask my Aunty Laxmi, "Can I please have curry or can I please have roti and tripe curry?" She'll say, "Yes, I'll do it for you." It's a big deal because they're doing all that for you for free, because they want to."*

Araya links cooking to the emotional idea of "*creating a home*" and speaks to a traditional view of women as nurturers within families:

> "*And I guess it's more than just about cooking for your household and making sure there's a warm meal... They (the women in the family) were always the backbone. Behind closed doors where the actual things were happening, they kept things running*."

The idea of independence was also listed by certain participants as a common factor that joins women within their families. Aaminah linked the idea of independence to financial provision and tertiary education, stating: "*I think they all are independent because they want to be able to provide for themselves.*" Tasneem spoke about financial independence but also highlighted the idea of being functional and able to make decisions regarding one's life without input from others. Sheetal referenced the idea of "*hyper-independence*," suggesting that women in her family struggle to ask for help and would prefer to deal with their

problems by themselves. Aziza mentioned a similar pattern within her family, stating that the women in her family, "d*on't really need anyone to function*."

3.2 Outliers in Terms of Traditional Family Roles

Participants listed divorce, family tension, not taking care of the kids, and not conforming to societal norms and responsibilities (cooking, cleaning, etc.) as the key indications of women who did not fit into expected family roles for women. Jaymala described women as peace keepers in their marriages, while their husbands were framed as more dominant and conflictual. As a result, she was critical when speaking about a relative whose relationship did not fit this pattern:

> "*And she (Jaymala's aunt) doesn't let her children see Damian, because cause they recently divorced. It's just weird…. It's an ugly marriage and I'm not used to that. I'm saying it's just weird for an Indian woman to do that… He would take care of the kids after working the whole day. Like she couldn't even bath them by herself."*

Ayesha described the women in her family as the "*stem*" and as an essential part of the system. She then identified a relative who she believed did not fit into this role and in doing so, indirectly isolated her from the family system noting*, "I don't really see her fitting in that stem because right now how the stem is, we're fine without her. Like she's in our family but she doesn't really contribute that much, and I feel like we're still strong*." Elaborating on this, she highlighted the emotional and financial provision that she feels this relative does not offer and why this is different to other family members:

> *"I can't really understand why if you have the capabilities to help someone, why you wouldn't. Whereas it feels like she, not to be mean or anything, just doesn't want to help… It's hard because I feel like that caring aspect is a bit less with this aunt."*

Tasneem focused on values of care and nurturance when describing the women in her family. She appeared critical when explaining why her aunt was different from the norms expected from women in her family:

> *"My dad's sister, when it comes to playing the role of like a mother and holding the family together type of role, I would say I don't think she plays that role at all. And I think she has, I feel like I'm stereotyping here, but she has more male tendencies. So she's more like the breadwinner in the house, in the sense of working and bringing in money instead. And she's not very maternal at all in the sense of her kids."*

Araya and Aaminah, who both identified themselves as women who did not fit into the expected role of women in their families, spoke about other relatives who also did not conform, either neutrally or admiringly. For example, Araya, speaking about her aunt said:

> *"She wanted the more independent life. She didn't like cooking, didn't like doing any of those things. Then she got married to a white guy… And she doesn't cook, he cooks for her. She didn't fit any of those roles (associated with the) typical Indian, Muslim women."*

Aaminah described her aunt who went against the grain of what was expected in their family of women in a positive and admiring light:

> "*When you picture an Indian lady of her age, she is the stark opposite of that. Her husband passed away a while ago...but she didn't give up her life. When her husband passed, she was like, "I have shit to do. I've got three daughters to raise. I'm going to do my best to raise them." And she studied and did things… People still laugh, and they say that when we get old, that's who we're going to be. We want to be her*."

4) Intergenerational Differences Between Indian Women in Family Systems

This theme highlights participants' perceptions of the transgenerational processes evidenced in their families of origin especially as they related to the women in the family. These often highlighted differences and similarities between current and previous generations of Indian women within their families. Most participants felt there were very clear differences between older and younger generations of women in terms of their autonomy regarding major life decisions. This was also observed across different generations when examining the information gathered from the genograms related to career and family-related life decisions. Additionally, many participants felt as though younger generations of Indian women had more of a voice and a greater sense of agency in shaping individual life goals and ambitions, particularly regarding gender roles. The role of religion in shaping conformity to expected roles of previous generations was also noted as significant. The factors that contribute to participants' identification as Indian women reflect the similarities and patterns of continuity that they perceive in relation to previous generations of women within their families.

4.1 Factors Shaping Participants' Identifications as Indian Women

Participants linked their identification as Indian women to their understanding of family values, origin and culture. More than half of the interviewed participants referenced the idea of 'Indian family values' and how this has shaped their understanding of themselves as Indian women. For example, Araya explained this: *"Although I want to be independent, I am quite a family person and that was always instilled in me. I see it in Indian culture and other families."* Aziza saw togetherness as an important part of Indian families: "*How they (Indian families) come together when it's, not only when it's like funerals and weddings, but they're just very close as a family and I enjoy that… And it's also just the way that they can rely on each other. It's just, it's beautiful, I think*." The genogram analysis reflected a recognition of interrelatedness that is identified as existing amongst Indian families. Tasneem

pointed to a similar idea when asked to elaborate on the family values that she believes shapes her identity as an Indian woman: "*I feel like Indian families are quite close. I think behaving in such a way or acting in such a way that you keep your reputation and your name in a certain way. But I feel like a lot also has to do with family and togetherness and the importance of family...*" Jaymala also referenced the behaviours that she associates with Indian families specifically and how this is linked to the idea of both emotional and financial support and betterment:

> *"I think like the family aspect in general like, keeping in contact somehow. I have noticed that if someone is sick in my family, everyone goes and visits, everyone goes. So I think it's like that just that keeping that like closeness and supporting your family."*

Participants presented their own individually constructed understandings of what it means to be Indian, describing how they have come to form hybrid identities that incorporate values from the past and their own understandings of who they would like to be as Indian women.

Araya explained how her experiences within her family system and her observation of her parents' relationship influenced her willingness not to conform to gender roles associated with previous generations of women within her family. For example, she noted that because she experienced her father as narcissistic and dominant, she found it difficult to accept her mother's role as a woman at home of being submissive. She explains that because of this, she was driven further away from the traditional role of women propagated by her nuclear family and pushed herself towards independence, ambition and her career: *"I didn't want to depend on anyone, but that stems from my father.."*

Sheetal explained that she did not feel as though she needed to choose between being a fully traditional Indian woman or being a "modern" woman: *"I can be both. I love the fact that I'm Indian…and I can have certain views (regarding the) traditional Indian side. I can also have views of being on the more modern side, and that's OK. I don't have to agree with everything but that doesn't mean that I can't subscribe to my Indianness in my own way."*

4.2 Participants' Perceived Points of Differentiation Within Family Systems

Participants listed factors relating to agency and individuality as a clear difference between previous and current generations of Indian women in their families. Tasneem explained: *"Our generation of women we're very different in that sense, we have our opinions…. We question what we feel needs to be questioned and we have our own way of thinking."* An important factor that she believed has shaped this is the different values enforced by newer generations of parents within her family. This is seen in the following comparison between the considerations which shaped her grandmother's choices within her newly formed family after marriage, and what Tasneem imagines her experience will be:

> ***"****She always tells us how when she got married to my grandfather, she always had to try and be the perfect wife had to do the cooking, cleaning, was always tired. And I think she emphasised that so much that because she used to be worried about what her in-laws would think. And I think for us, it's we're different in the sense that we were brought up not to, okay, not to not care about what people think. In some ways our parents did say, "Imagine what people will think," but it wasn't to an extreme level."*

Participants also referenced a clear deviation from traditional roles expected of women in their understanding of why current generations are different from those before. For example, Aziza mentioned the idea of financial independence and previous expectations within her

family that men be the authority on how matters related to money were handled: "*My granny was very dependent on my grandfather. She knew nothing about the insurance policies, or she didn't even buy groceries. My grandfather did everything."* Jaymala expressed a similar idea, but associated traditional gender roles and familial expectations for women with a geographical location, namely Durban which was the place of her family's origin: *"I feel in Durban, the mentality especially for woman, it's just like, oh, you know, get in the kitchen, be a mother, you don't have to worry about where you could be, be a housewife, even though you could get a job and do more with it."*

Aaminah explained the intergenerational differences and similarities based on her understanding of the norms that prevailed when her grandmother was young, compared to those of today*:*

> *"It's quite common knowledge that within that particular era of time, women weren't really given much of a say. And if you were, then you were quite lucky or you were probably frowned upon because I don't think being a working woman was quite prevalent then. But also, I feel like or at least within maybe my immediate family, I think my siblings and I were given quite a lot of agency in developing our own thoughts and outlook on life. Like you know, my parents don't really shove the ideology down our throats and expect us to believe everything they say."*

Participants also viewed themselves as different from previous generations, because despite their pursuit of similar life goals related to family, they attributed different meanings to these. Ayesha stated:

> *"Their generation was more about staying at home, cooking the meals, taking care of the kids… Whereas now those aren't my goals and I know for a fact those aren't my sister's goals. We want to be successful and have our own business. It's not just about*

kids. I obviously do want kids in the future, but that's not the only thing that's gonna define me, if that makes sense."

Araya compared herself to her sister, whom she understood as being closer to previous generations because of her strong desire to get married. Although Araya describes herself as also wanting a family (a value associated with previous generations), she views herself as different because of her prioritising of her career above this: *"She (Araya's sister) wants to cook, and she wants to be a mom. I mean, I want to be a mom too. But like, you know, my priorities were different because I wanted to study."*

Aaminah reflected on the pressure that she believes Indian families still put on younger generations to get married and to have children. She notes that although this is something that she wants, she views the idea of marriage as different from previous generations within her family:

"*I do (want to get married) but I also feel like making it the 'it' of my existence is very limiting. I don't want to do that to myself... That obligation and the need to get married, I feel like that takes out the happiness of it. So that's like my thought on it. I do still want to do those things but I don't want to do it in the way society is expecting me to."*

5. The Role of Culture in Identity Formation

This theme highlights the meanings that participants attach to their cultural and religious identities, and how this shapes their sense of being Indian within both their families and the broader South African context. Participants referenced the idea of "Indian culture" as being fluid and subjectively redefined across generations by individuals within family systems. This was linked to elements of the culture that were experienced as negative or unhealthy, such as patriarchal belief systems and ideologies related to rigid gender roles.

Cultural symbols were also linked to the South African Indian experience as well as the meanings of these within the family system. Related to this, religion was often presented as being intertwined with the experience of Indian culture, shaping values, personal ethics, and gender norms. Participants identified as either Muslim, Christian or Hindu in terms of their religious belief system.

5.1 Values Attached to Indian Culture

Participants at times spoke broadly about the values they attached to Indian culture. Aaminah described the "bad" parts of being Indian associated with previous generations, noting how rigid understandings of masculinity have been experienced as negative and unhealthy within her own family system. Reflecting on this she said, "*Being Indian is about loving the goods of your culture but also understanding the bad parts are and those that need to be changed..."* Similarly, Tasneem referenced her understanding of patriarchy and Indian culture, but how this has not affected her positive beliefs regarding her Indian identity: "*I don't view Indianness as a dominant patriarchal culture at all. I suppose it's more about your individual experience of being Indian and I've had a good experience with it to a large extent…. I just feel like I identify as Indian and I should be proud of that in a lot of ways, right? I embrace being Indian in the way that I understand it."*

Cultural markers that were identified related to food, dress code, music, celebrations and festivals. For example, Sheetal described the parts of her that are more theatrical, music-loving and outspoken to being Indian:

> *"I feel like my culture is very rich and very interesting and very colourful. I've done dancing from me young age, but I did it because I liked it. But at the same time, it's a part of me that's also very Hindu and very religious because we danced to prayers. So, it's something I should be proud of because that part of me that likes to be like*

loud, that likes to act, that likes to be like lyrical, likes to dance. These are the very Indian parts of me."

Ayesha highlighted her memories of food, family and religion as important influences that shaped her experience of being Indian: *"Something that we love doing is Eid day, which is like our Christmas, it's all about the food and like being with your family. Having good food, especially (laughs)."*

Muneerah described her understanding of Indian culture in relation to other ethnic groups that she grew up interacting with and the complex interactions between religion and culture:

"There's certain things that we do that other cultures wouldn't do. I live in Lenasia and we have coloured community right next to us. Our practices are totally different from theirs. The food we eat that's like the most thing like we enjoy the spiciness…. And I also think about our values, like, for example, marriage doesn't come from religion, like although it does, it's more within culture."

Araya also touched on the interactions between food, tradition and family and how she understands Italian culture: *"Indian food because l that's always been a constant in families, like you have to learn how to make your curries, you have to learn which spices to buy. And like those jokes, like that your rotis have to be round. Those generational things that have been passed down. Which is, I guess just the culture."*

Jaymala stated that because she did not grow up around other Indian people, she felt different from her extended family in terms of how she expressed her Indian identity. Additionally, she notes that one of the reasons she was able to accept being different from her

peers is because she feels confident she will be able to pass on her inherited and learned cultural values to the next generation:

> *"When I was young, it was like, why don't I feel Indian? Why am I not like my cousins? Why don't I say words like this? Why don't I relate to this experience… And so I think I like noticing what they embraced and what they didn't embrace, it helped me come to terms with the fact that it's always going to be different and that it's fine to be different. And like I don't have to tick all the boxes to be this like this 'typical' Indian girl, like I do think obviously there is kind of controversial to say but like. Just observing (cultural values and practices) is good enough, because at least like I witness those things or I heard those things and I can pass it on (to the next generation)."*

5.2 The Role of Religion in Shaping Identity

Irrespective of their religion, many participants referenced the important role of religion in shaping norms and values regarding appropriate and expected behaviour for women within their families. Differences relating to expressions of religious beliefs and how these relate to the social expectations of women were referenced as a difference between past and current generations of women. For example, Muneerah described how the concept of modesty has shifted in terms of dress, Islam and how women within her family have responded to this: "*We all tend to wear scarves, but we might not dress the same right now. So I think our viewpoints of modesty have changed a bit and it's not totally nailed with religion however it's still there and it's something that we've picked up from them."*

Ayesha seemed ambivalent about the gender roles prescribed by her Islamic religion:

> *"I also think from a feminist perspective, it is kind of annoying that you have to depend on men. But then because of my religion, like I'm going to do that…But this is*

my journey and yes, I have a man by my side but I'm independent on my own and like all of my religious decisions and everything are to do with me and how I feel."

Additionally, Ayesha's conformity to the role of women propagated by her family was also influenced by her own observations of her parental system. Ayesha notes that her mother was the breadwinner at home, which seemed at odds with the traditional tenets of the Muslim religion which considers men to be the heads of the household. She also highlights the confusion and conflict associated with how this was navigated within her own family:

"In Islam, the man is supposed to be the breadwinner. The woman is just supposed to listen to the man. But growing up my mom was on top financially, while my dad was always at the bottom and struggling. And I think the same for me, like I'm not one to let a guy make me feel less independent person…. I don't want to depend on someone because I feel like I am capable of providing for myself."

Some participants linked their own gender identity as Indian women to their family's religious practices and the associated meanings. Sheetal mentioned her family's partaking in rituals and festivals associated with Hinduism as a crucial aspect of how she has developed her identity as an Indian woman: "*I think we were still fasting, actually, for Tapak the day of the dead. So we still do all those sort of ceremonies and stuff we have, we celebrate Diwali…."* Similarly, Ayesha highlighted the important role of her religious identity in understanding who she is as an Indian woman*:*

"I know (being) Indian doesn't necessarily have to do with Islam, but for me, I think they interrelate because I don't know, I could be Indian and not be a Muslim, but for me they just coexist…. And I think a lot of the decisions that I make in life,I always think like, "Does this go with my morals?" Like those are usually just related to

religion, but then it's also to do with my culture. Which I feel like speaks to the Indian side."

Aaminah mentioned the important link between expressions and interpretations of her religion within the context of an Indian family: *"Being a good Muslim wife means that you need to like serve your husband, but that's not what Islam says. That's what you have been brought up with, having grown up in like an Indian household, if that makes sense".*

Tasneem spoke about the morals that she understands as being associated with Islam and how this has influenced her family values and the behaviours expected of her:

"A lot comes from my family and what they've taught me, especially my dad. He's very strong on morals and values. We come from a Muslim family. So it can be very strict in terms of that…."

Jaymala, who is a practicing Christian, said that being exposed to Hinduism in her family shaped how she made sense of her and her family's identity as South African Indians with a tie to the geographical location that is India. She felt this especially because she noted that she was not able to understand the native Indian language of her ancestors, Tamil:

"My mum's Christian and my dad's Hindu, so having that like duality like even though I wasn't allowed to, like, experience my dad's like religion. Just having that like around was nice. Like, it does contribute partly to my identity because I think in South Africa, because we don't speak the language (Tamil) and have like as many experiences that are similar to India Indians, religion is one of the only ways you kind of can get that connection."

Araya's experience diverged notably from other participants in her referencing of her sexual orientation and the ways in which this has created a point of conflict within her

Muslim family. She expressed how she understands her queer identity in relation to the contradictory belief systems presented within her religion, and endorsed by her mother:

> *"Between my parents, my mom is more religious. There were some hectic conversations that we had where she was saying that it's (homosexuality) wrong. Because in Islam, marriage fulfills half of our lives and our deen (a reference to the ideal way of life prescribed by the Islamic faith), so what would happen to me if I married a woman? What God would think?"*

6) Balancing Family Expectations: Differentiation Versus Belonging

This theme discusses the broad difficulties experienced by different participants when trying to balance family expectations and associated feelings of obligation with their sense of self and individuality. Most of the participants spoke of a particular conflict or point of tension within themselves and their personal lives that counteracted with the expectations and wishes of their family-of-origin. The first subtheme associated with this reflects how participants responded to these conflicts within their lives. This was usually done by finding a manner of accommodating both their and their families' wishes or by putting particular emotional boundaries in place between themselves and their families. The second subtheme refers to the importance that the idea of "family" and concomitant respect, held for them. The latter was as a central motivating factor for needing to find a middle ground between their and their families' expectations for their lives.

6.1 Setting Up Boundaries

Certain participants navigated conflicts related to disagreements about what their families expected of them versus what they wanted for themselves by finding points of negotiation and compromise. For example, Ayesha admired her sister for being able to

accommodate the wishes of her family to dedicate herself to her religion as well as her desire to find a career of her own:

> *"My sister is very popular, she has a huge following on social media. So in that regard, she's very successful and earns like a really good income from that. But she did that all while studying and practicing the Quran and everything. She carries herself and is able to do so much, but like still be really successful. It's really interesting to see and good for me to see as a role model."*

Sheetal explained the pressure of choosing a career that her academically-driven parents would support. She explains her plan to accommodate both the wishes of her parents and to later find a way of satisfying her own career plans and personal ambitions:

> *"I wanted to get into acting and like stage acting, directing, screenwriting when I was younger. But I don't think that's something that they would support… which is why I did choose psychology because I did have an interest in it, but my first choice would always be, I would say acting. So, while I'm getting my experience for psychology for my masters, before I go apply for my masters, I think I'd also start pursuing a bit of acting then too."*

Sheetal also spoke about her sister, another woman from her generation, and how Sheetal believes she has almost 'earned' the right within their family system to voice her needs by fulfilling the fundamental roles expected of a daughter:

> *"My sister, she's very like modern and she doesn't really care what anyone thinks. And I guess it's OK because on like a very fundamental level, she's just a normal child. She just does her schoolwork, she helps around the house, she loves my parents. There's nothing that she's not supposed to do because she deserves to do what she wants to do because she's also an adult now. So yeah, I think that's also a thing that*

we do, we definitely put boundaries up because we're all adults now. We're not just children that can be controlled and told what to do."

Other participants dealt with points of disagreement with their family by putting boundaries in place in their attempt to protect their individual aspirations and desires. For example, Muneerah describes being required to wear traditional Islamic female attire by her grandmother, which was tied to her family's expectations of modesty. She explains her frustration and resentment upon having to do so and her need to push back against the wishes of her grandmother:

"When I was small she (her grandmother) tried changing me but I think the way she did it previously wasn't right. So, although I used to wear an abaya before I just felt as though it was forced upon me. So I never enjoyed doing that and then she had to accept it at the end. It's not something I wanted to do...."

Araya, speaking about her older sister's disapproval of her queer sexual orientation in relation to their religious beliefs, uses boundaries as a way of 'agreeing to disagree' in which she believes respect is still present and understood:

"She said she does love me but that there are certain groups in which I can't behave a certain way in front of her kids, or she might not feel comfortable attending my wedding. And the thing is, I'm okay with that. It doesn't really bother me because I don't need her to do that. If you respect me and I respect you, that's fine. That's where we can leave it and I'll respect her boundaries."

6.2 Valuing and Respecting the Family System

The idea of respect and tolerance for one's family is a finding that was prevalent across several participant interviews. For many participants, despite disagreeing with certain aspects of their family's value systems, they were motivated to find a way of accommodating

these based on a need to maintain respect. For Ayesha, this was motivated by a combination of her understanding of both religion and Indian culture:

> *"Your parents are supposed to be like the people that you respect thoroughly in Islam…. I always try and I ask myself is this going to be respectful? Because I feel like I value what my parents think, and they've made me the person that I am. I make decisions based on what I've been taught and even like madrassah, which is like Islamic studies, I think those like helped me to learn the skills I needed in order to make decisions."*

Sheetal, referencing a family member who she had little contact with also spoke about the idea of respect as mediating conflict-ridden relationships: *"She doesn't really call us so we're not very close with her, but obviously because she's my dad's mom, we do, respect her and make an effort whenever we are supposed to see her."* Similarly, Jaymala referenced family tensions and how she has navigated this as someone who forms a part of the younger generation, influenced by respect towards the people who have raised her:

> *"You know when you're younger, your parents would talk to family for you? So now I'm slowly establishing relationships where it's like I have to wish them happy birthday or like I have to wish them well for surgeries and stuff like that. But I keep it at a distance though, like my biggest thing with my family is that I don't tell them anything super serious or secret to my life. I don't lean on them for super support, but I'm there and I know what I need to do. I need to still give a certain amount of appreciation (to them) because many of them raised me."*

Tasneem, who mentioned her grandmother's history in relation to apartheid activism referred to the idea of respect as part of her reason for wanting to keep the stories about her grandmother alive in her family: *"I feel like if I didn't think anything of, for example, my*

great grandmother, I wouldn't feel the need to so strongly keep the family legacy remembered or relevant."

Sheetal, on the other hand, associated visiting her family in Durban with feelings of obligation. She also elaborated on the various expectations to which she is confined and associated with her family in Durban, which she experiences as different from her nuclear family who reside in Johannesburg:

> *"I guess sometimes even when you want to do something that they don't enjoy, like say you want to go with your friends, but they also want you to attend like a family and go visit family. You want to do stuff for yourself, but when you're in Durban you know that you're expected to be participating in family all the time."*

Conclusion

This chapter presented the main themes that emerged from the research interviews and genogram data of participants. These themes highlight gendered intergenerational patterns related to culture and religion as pivotal to shaping the identity of young South African Indian women. The themes also encompass the complex identity negotiations that participants face as they balance the processes of individuation versus belonging within their family systems. This is further complicated by the importance of family values in Indian families and the potential consequences of deviating from the expected role of women. This suggests that participants experience significant feelings of ambivalence as they engage in continuous processes of identifying and disidentifying with various aspects of their identities as women. The following chapter will contextualise these results within the chosen theoretical framework and previous literature pertaining to the research topic.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. It offers an analysis of the research findings in relation to the existing literature and through the theoretical lens of transgenerational family theory. The overall aim of this study was to contribute to an understanding of how transgenerational family histories influence the construction of the identity of South African Indian women with the following questions being posed at the beginning:

1. What role do transgenerational family processes play in the shaping of young Indian women's sense of identity?

2. What transgenerational family stories play a role in the process of identity formation of young Indian women?

3. In which ways are understandings of South African Indian female identity similar/different from previous generations?

The findings of this study suggest that participants associated the idea of 'family' with traditional qualities such as togetherness, love and care. The family was also linked to characteristics of guidance, support and emotional roots for participants, as many highlighted their families' core influences in shaping their sense of self. These findings resonate with core tenets of transgenerational family theory that propose the idea of interconnectedness between all members within a family, as forming part of a larger, psychological network (Skowron & Farrar, 2015). Participants' narratives foregrounded the important role their family played in shaping their individual identities and belief systems, through both direct and indirect means. This aligns with the theoretical assertion that family values and expectations create habitual ways of being for members of that system, creating templates that new generations are socialised according to (Lieberman, 1979; Rovers, 2004).

The sub-themes of connection and togetherness associated with family are also supported by existing literature that highlights the importance of family in the lives of South African Indians. For example, since the time of their arrival in South Africa, the family was used as a source of safety and grounding to guard against the traumatic experiences faced by Indian indentured labourers (Morris & Kuper, 1961). The family environment acted as the primary site of transmission of social values and behaviours associated with India, precipitated by feelings of nostalgia and a longing for home experienced by migrants (Singh, 2008). Seedat-Khan (2012) states that intergenerational stories shape constructions of the meanings associated with one's sense of being Indian in South Africa on both an individual level and in relation to one's family heritage. Thus, to comprehensively understand the weight associated with the meanings of family reflected in the findings, it is necessary to contextualise this both within the present, day-to-day lives of participants as well as within their broader family legacies. In this regard, the genogram proved to be a useful tool as part of gathering information regarding the historical legacies of participants' families. The historical understanding of family as a significant support system in the lives of South African Indians is important as it provides a sense of not only what family means to the participants interviewed, but also what this concept may have meant for previous generations within their families. Furthermore, it encourages us to consider the sub-themes of togetherness and connection mentioned by participants when describing their families as two-fold. From one perspective, it speaks to the universal ideas often associated with family such as closeness and love, facilitating functions of emotional support and belonging in the lives of participants. From another, it may also speak to the idea of unity and intergenerational notions of the South African Indian family as a joint force against the oppressive other during the colonial and apartheid eras. Literature has argued that it is necessary to hold both these views in mind in understanding how socio-political factors create a sense of collective

memory within a family's history and transform the conscious and unconscious understandings transmitted across generations (McGoldrick et al., 2006).

The second theme which emerged from the analysis highlighted women whom participants identified as having a significant impact on their lives and/or their family history. Participants listed their mothers, grandmothers, and older female relatives as important because of the manner in which they believed these women taught them about womanhood and modeled behaviours that participants used to guide their own values. This is in line with previous literature on the topic which highlights the significant role that mothers, grandmothers and elders play in the socialisation processes of children in Indian families (Inman et al., 2007). This has been linked to the importance of continuity of cultural and family values and to the understanding that women are often responsible for instilling these values into newer generations within South African Indian families (Radhakrishnan, 2019). These values were reflected when participants were asked about why they identified with certain women in their families, and their responses referenced personality traits and/or shared beliefs such as independence, respect, gentleness, and kindness. Literature on the topic of values commonly associated with South African Indian women link principles of respect, gentleness and kindness to more traditional forms of femininity (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016), while independence is viewed as being linked to newer generations of women (Sana, 2022). These values may be indicative of different parts of the self that have to be negotiated as participants narratives often identified with relatives who were trying to balance education and career with more traditional roles related to culture, history and gender. This is further explored in the next theme related to how participants understood the role of women within their families.

The third theme which emerged presented the broad roles that Indian women both are and are expected to fulfil within their families. When asked about similarities between

women within their families, participants highlighted traditional roles such as the ability to keep the family together and to provide care through guidance and household activities such as cooking. Sana (2022) states that within the South African Indian community, food symbolises a connection to heritage and belonging, and women are expected to maintain this through their preparation of food. As reported by Sana (2022), cooking and the provision of food were linked to feelings of duty and were in fact experienced as burdensome. This was echoed in the findings of this study as participants referenced the sense of anxiety and pressure associated with fulfilling these roles. This reveals the ambivalent feelings that South African Indian women may experience regarding this aspect of their identity: on the one hand pride, a sense of belonging linked to adherence to traditional values, as well as frustration related to their lack of choice in being assigned this role by their families. This idea of being allocated a particular role within one's family system in line with the cultural values to which that family adheres and can be understood using Bowen's notion of the functioning position (Bowen, 1978). The latter is helpful when examining the transmission of expected roles of women within families. Bowen listed gender and nodal events such as migration as pivotal influences which shape the emotional needs of the family system and subsequently create certain functions to be fulfilled by members (Titelman, 2014). The historical significance of migration to South Africa on an intergenerational level was noted within the literature to be a primary influence in consolidating the traditional roles expected of Indian women during the time of indenture (Seedat-Khan, 2012). This can be seen as a context for the prominent theme of homemaking expected of women reflected in the research findings. Consideration of this theme alongside the theoretical framework suggests that the functioning position of Indian women is significantly shaped by gender. Conversely, this also implies that the emotional needs of Indian family systems are dependent on the capacity of the women to fulfil their respective roles (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This further emphasises the importance of

conformity to family values and norms in order to maintain a sense of emotional equilibrium within Indian families. This was illustrated in an example from one of the participants who described women as the "stem" of her family, speaking to the necessary and containing (albeit burden-heavy) function she perceives the women in her family as serving. Kerr and Bowen (1988) explain that one's emotional response to and understanding of their functioning position in their family is influenced by individual characteristics such as personality traits of the individual. This in turn shapes the nature of their individual functioning and re-defines the characteristics associated with the functioning position itself within the nuclear and broader family system. Information regarding this was elicited when participants were probed about their feelings regarding women who did not conform or fit into the functioning positions expected of them, which will be discussed next.

A subtheme which emerged from the findings suggested that participants' experiences of women who did not fit into expected roles were influenced by two main sets of conditions. Firstly, this was linked to whether the behaviour of the identified individual elicited any conflict or sense of tension within the broader family system. Secondly, participants' feelings regarding these individuals were mediated by where they located themselves in relation to the expected role of women within their families. This also impacted whether they tended to agree or disagree with the family's response to the identified relative. For example, participants who identified themselves as women who did not fit into the expected role of women in their families, spoke about other relatives who too did not conform, in a neutral or admiring manner. On the other hand, participants who described themselves using traditional values were critical of relatives who did not conform to familial expectations for women. Thus, the findings suggest that the manner in which an individual responds to and potentially transforms their functioning position is associated with their perceived notions regarding how conformity/ non-conformity to this may affect the emotional equilibrium of their family. This provides insights into how

the identity of South African Indian women is constructed and transformed across generations within families.

Participants were asked about factors shaping their identification as Indian women, to which a theme emerged related to the idea of conformity to "Indian family values." Ideas related to closeness, interrelatedness and support between members by virtue of the familial relationship were referenced. This speaks to the notion of Indian culture as collectivist, the importance of interdependence and the recognition of the belief that an individual exists in relation to the other (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2015). Participants reflected on the ways in which they had incorporated these values while also choosing to dis-identify with particular belief systems from previous generations. For example, one of the participants mentioned that because of her familial experiences of domestic violence at home, she perceived her father as the dominant parent while her mother took on a more passive role. She explains that because of this, she was driven further away from the traditional role of women propagated by her nuclear family and pushed herself towards independence, ambition and her career. This example illustrates how the subjective value assigned to ethnic identity is significantly influenced by experiences of gender and socialisation within families (Bowen, 1978; Nguyen et al., 2015). This also demonstrates how the values associated with South African Indian culture itself can be altered by its members over time and how the family acts as a central location for the transformation of these.

Within the context of gender and socialisation processes, participants described the ways in which they feel their identities as women have both converged and diverged simultaneously when compared to previous generations within their families. For example, a theme emerged related to the agency and sense of individuality that participants believe themselves to have as young Indian women today. One of the reasons for this was understood

to be linked the different values enforced by newer generations of parents within family systems. This may link to understanding that a child's level of differentiation is strongly shaped by that of their parents (Bowen, 1978). In this study, participants felt as though their parents' capacity to question and challenge the norms associated with their families allowed them the opportunity to do the same. Additionally, participants noted that the shifting gender roles of women in broader South African society had impacted the expectations their families had for them in terms of career and marriage ideals. In response to this, participants linked the idea of marriage and having children to a more traditional version of the South African Indian women, compared to a newer, modern category of women who prioritise career, independence, and a wish for self-sustainability outside of the support of their families. Depending on the participant, different aspects associated with these versions of femininity were utilised as facets of identity, shaping values, hopes and personal goals for the future. For example, some participants stated that although they strive towards goals related to marriage and having families of their own, they felt they were different from previous generations because they were not solely defined by this aspect of womanhood. Additionally, they believed that the expectations of previous generations associated with marriage and family were linked to patriarchal and limiting belief systems that were imposed on women, rather than the women having any sense of genuine choice in this. Thus, although their behaviours and life ideals may be similar to those of previous generations, participants perceive themselves as different because of the new subjectively-constructed meanings that they have assigned to these. Similarly, many participants focused on the importance of their careers in establishing a sense of financial freedom and independence, a characteristic that was absent in many of the narratives involving previous generations of Indian women. Genogram data revealed that for many of the women from previous generations within participants' families who were employed, working was associated with necessity, duty and caring for their families. These

examples offer insight into how young Indian women are able to incorporate and transform particular values and behaviours as part of creating contemporary identities that are both similar to and different from generations before them. This process was often accompanied by uncomfortable feelings for participants as they seemed aware of the patriarchal roots, framed as oppressive, associated with the traditional behaviours of previous generations of women, that they were now choosing to conform to. One of the ways in which participants navigated this struggle, was highlighted by the polarisation of the notions of the modern versus the traditional South African Indian woman, which will be discussed next.

Participants' narratives often revealed dichotomous versions of femininity, illustrating the difference between norms for women from previous generations compared to those of today. This was often seen when participants described the perceived subjugation and gender-biased influence associated with the roles expected of women within previous generations of their families. Participants positioned their life experiences as being completely different from the ones of those of the older women in their families because of the sense of having more opportunities to oppose and challenge these previously accepted norms. This speaks to the importance of considering individual identity formation within the intersection of the cultural, social, familial and political environments, as well as how transgenerational legacies are shaped by these (McGoldrick et al., 2006). As demonstrated through the findings, participants' experiences of these influence the manner in which they disassociate or integrate various aspects of their transgenerational legacies. Through this process, the individual acquires a unique position and role in their family history as their decisions inform a vital link which either disrupts or continues the transmission of particular patterns (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). The analysis of the interviews and the genograms suggested that because of their need to identify as modern women, participants struggled to see the ways in which they also conformed with the views of older generations. For example, one participant expressed her

disagreement regarding childrearing roles expected of women propagated by South African Indian culture. She later expressed disapproval towards a female family member who she believed did not express a traditional maternal spirit of care towards her children with the participant instead describing her as more “masculine.” This example illustrates the complicated nature of identity negotiation as individuals may experience a sense of ambiguity regarding how family values are applied and understood within different contexts and situations. Additionally, idealisation of one version of femininity (the modern woman) above the other (the traditional woman) may be part of a strategy aimed at resolving the tension young women experience associated with this. This may result in the identity formation process being influenced by the dismissing of alternative or even ambivalent perspectives, rather than the reflexive process involving being able to navigate the push-and-pull forces and feelings of doubtfulness and uncertainty associated with differentiation (Titelman, 2014).

Another theme that emerged through the interview and genogram analysis indicated that participants’ experiences of what it means to be Indian are shaped by a complex interaction between cultural markers such as religion, and traditions, and the ways in which these are practiced and transformed within the transgenerational family system. This is aligned with previous literature by Vawda (2017)who comments on the interchangeable and unintentional equating of terms such as race, religion, culture, and ethnicity that are often referenced colloquially in the everyday discourse of South Africans. The findings of the present study also support Vahed's (2020) understanding of how aspects of religion are adapted by individuals to form culture, which in turn influences their ethnic identities and their collective identity within their family system. For example, Muslim participants mentioned the traditional role of women propagated by Islamic law and how this impacted the behaviours expected of them by their parents. These factors also shaped intra and intergenerational family dynamics associated with gender which determined how power and

influence were allocated and shared within the system between members. It is important to note that this did not occur in a deterministic way. Similar to the negotiations participants engaged in related to familial expectations, a theme emerged reflecting the bargaining processes associated with the patriarchal values proposed by religion and the applications of this within the family. These processes were also linked to feelings of discomfort as participants questioned the norms of their religion, while at the same time wanting to remain respectful towards their parents and familial belief systems. For both Hindu and Muslim participants, it was found that these negotiation processes were influenced more by the practice of religion within their families, rather than the rules and expectations prescribed by the religion itself. For example, for many participants, the extent to which their parents conformed or did not conform to religious belief systems shaped their perceived fluidity or rigidity of religion and ethnic identity. This illustrates the important role that previous generations within a family play in the transformation and transmission of values that shape the religious identities of both the individual and the family as a collective.

The significance of religion and culture in the lives of participants is explained by Singh (2008) who highlights the sense of pride and emotional weight embedded within the expression of Muslim and Hindu religious identities for South African Indian individuals. Literature on race and identity suggests that this informs the process of cultural identity construction in diasporas, in which identities are shaped in relation to the 'Other' (Hall, 1994). In other words, conceptualisations of the self are influenced by understandings of what, or rather who one it is not. Modi (2005) states that when Indians initially arrived in South Africa, culture and religion were used as unification strategies to form a sense of solidarity and resistance against the colony that imposed their racial classification on them initially. This historical context is important to hold in mind when thinking about the meanings attached to the South African Indian identity today as literature states that cultural

stories, nostalgia and memories are transmitted across generations to inform experiences of family and heritage. This links with the idea that expressions of Indian culture within the South African context are associated with heritage and a way of asserting identity to guard against experiences of marginalisation within the post-apartheid landscape (Radhakrishnan, 2019). It is crucial to contextualise the findings of this study against this historical backdrop as it provides an understanding of the weight attached to the preservation and continuity of cultural and religious traditions for the identities of South African Indian individuals. Furthermore, it offers an understanding of why deviations from these traditions by younger populations may be met with negative emotional responses within their families. This was illustrated in the present findings as participants reflected on the changing meanings attached to cultural expressions and values across generations within their families at different points in time. Thus, it can be said that the ethnic identity differentiation process of South African Indian women is complicated by the inherently collective aspect of the self, influenced by familial, social and political levels which consistently interact with and shape one another.

Another theme that emerged through the data analysis discussed the broad difficulties experienced by different participants when trying to balance family expectations and associated feelings of obligation with their sense of self and individuality. An associated subtheme discussed the ways in which participants navigated conflicts related to disagreements about what their families expected of them versus what they wanted for themselves by finding points of negotiation and compromise. This demonstrates one of the central goals associated with differentiation, in which an individual is able to form and hold onto their personal convictions in a self-reflective manner while still maintaining a connection to their family and their self-in-relation to their family (Rovers, 2004). Preserving relationships with their families was noted as being very important to participants as the ideas of respect and tolerance were prevalent across several interviews and analysed genogram

data. Literature has noted that this is common in individuals from collectivist cultures, as children are often socialised according to 'other-focused' values such loyalty and dutifulness (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). Furthermore, Erdem and Safi (2018) state that because of the sense of interrelatedness present within collectivist cultures, individuals' experiences of emotional well-being are more likely to be shaped by the needs of the group, or in this case, specifically the family system.

In terms of Bowen's (1978) concept of differentiation, the findings of this study highlight the importance of considering population-specific notions of the self, the family system and the associated subtleties that may permeate the forces of belonging versus individuation. For example, the findings suggest that for South African Indian women, the tension between these forces is further complicated by the powerful need to consider and sense of responsibility associated with familial obligation. At times, this was presented in the findings as opposing the individual needs of participants. I would argue that individual needs are to be understood as behaviours and expressions of identity that do not fit within the norms of what is expected within the family system, and thus have the potential to stimulate conflict or points of tension between members. Against this backdrop, the findings of this study also highlight the challenge associated with clearly distinguishing between the needs of the individual versus the needs of their family system, as these tended to overlap at certain points. For the participants of this study, this meant they at times often struggled to determine the extent to which their personal hopes and aspirations were shaped by their own beliefs, compared to those passed on intergenerationally.

These findings challenge Bowen's (1978) assertion of the universality of distinct individuation and belonging forces associated with differentiation processes. Rather, the insights garnered from this study shed light on the tension associated with the question: What does it mean to find one's sense of individuality when the essence of who one is has been

shaped in line with the needs of one's family? Furthermore, what does the differentiation process entail for a population of individuals who cannot separate the needs of the self and the other, and thus the forces of individuation versus belonging? Previous literature on the topic of differentiation is useful in shedding light on how this challenging process is navigated. Kerr and Bowen (1988) highlight the importance of being able to reflect on inherited values in a manner characterised by personal meaning and clarity as essential to a healthy differentiation process. The findings suggest that the strong emotional pull associated with familial obligation cannot be removed from this introspective process for the Indian women who participated in this study. This was demonstrated in participants' narratives in which points of conflict were grappled with between their own belief systems and behaviours compared to those of their families. However, because of the salient need to remain respectful towards their families, aspects of themselves had to be negotiated and at times sacrificed to maintain their role in the equilibrium of the system and to secure their sense of belonging. This was presented as an ongoing bargaining process fuelled by an apparent sense of ambivalence and uncertainty experienced by participants. Thus, in addition to individuation versus belonging, the experiences of ambivalence and duty to one's family need to be considered as embedded within the differentiation processes of the South African Indian women interviewed within this study. Failure to engage with these nuances may result in particular aspects of the individual's differentiation experience being dismissed, oversimplified or incorrectly pathologised. This draws attention to the important argument that Western theories of psychology, derived within predominantly individualistic contexts, need to be altered to fully encompass and acknowledge the intricacies introduced by social and cultural variables.

Conclusion

The findings of this study illustrate the significant role that transgenerational patterns of family dynamics, roles and values play in various aspects of the identities of young South African Indian women. Participants reflected on the fundamental role of the family in their lives, referencing qualities such as guidance, care and a sense of emotional roots. These were understood as being linked to universal functions of love and support offered by family systems. Additionally, these findings were contextualised using the historical meanings of the family for South African Indians, which speak to the idea of unity and intergenerational notions of the family as a joint force against the oppressive other during the colonial and apartheid eras. Findings also demonstrate the important role of women in the continuity of South African Indian culture and the different parts of the self that have to be negotiated to balance education and career with more traditional roles related to history and gender. This was further explored in findings which highlighted the prominent theme of homemaking expected of South African Indian women today. The negotiating of different roles linked to the modern versus the traditional woman were also discussed, as well as the sense of ambivalence and uncertainty participants may experience in navigating this. This was especially significant as values related to agency and independence were highlighted as common attributes of South African Indian women today. Findings suggested that women also conformed to traditional behaviours and ideals in their aspirations toward marriage and family. The new meanings and sense of personal choice attached to the older strivings of previous generations was found to be a defining aspect of the hybrid versions of South African Indian femininity and womanhood expressed by participants. he broad difficulties experienced by participants when balancing familial obligations with their sense of individuality were also discussed. This was explored using understandings of South African Indian families as collectivist and the implication for individual differentiation processes.

Lastly, it was argued that the experiences of ambivalence and duty to one's family need to be considered as part of the differentiation processes of South African Indian individuals to fully acknowledge the intricacies introduced by social and cultural variables.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study sought to better understand the identity of the South African Indian woman today by exploring family histories and the meanings individuals attribute to these within the context of broader South African history. Through interviews and the analysis of genograms, themes were elicited that demonstrated the complex roles and familial processes that South African Indian women have to negotiate in establishing their sense of self. The weight attached to the concept of family was presented in the first theme, which explored participants understanding of the family as a source of guidance, support and emotional roots. Secondly, women were found to be significant in South African Indian family systems, acting as homemakers and carriers of culture. Participants associated values of independence, gentleness and care with South African Indian women, referencing individuals prioritising of both the family and career in society today. This links with the idea of hybridity present in the findings as participants incorporated values of both traditional and modern Indian women as part of their self-concepts. Participants noted that despite adopting similar ideals to previous generations, such as those related to marriage and family, they believed they were different because of the sense of freedom and choice they had in not being defined solely by this aspect of their femininity. At times, the patriarchal underpinnings associated with traditional roles for women were presented as opposing the values of modern South African women, characterised by participants using qualities of agency and independence. This highlighted the internal feelings of conflict and tension that participants may experience when conforming to the values and behaviours of previous generations of women within their family. The findings were also contextualised using the chosen theoretical framework, Transgenerational Family Theory, which provided further insights into how participants engage with processes of differentiation within their family systems. This was particularly important when understanding the role of collectivistic Indian family values in how

participants make sense of the forces of individuality versus belonging at the heart of the differentiation process. It was found that for the South African Indian women interviewed, familial obligation and a sense of duty were prominent factors influencing their processes of differentiation. These were accompanied by significant feelings of ambivalence and confusion as participants engaged in a bargaining process aimed at balancing the needs of their families with their own, which at times opposed one another.

6.1 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study involved the small sample size of participants utilised. A greater number of participants would have yielded data with greater depth and may have highlighted additional nuances related to the topic at hand. This may have been helpful because of the individualised nature of identity research, which may make it challenging to generalise findings or to form more conclusive results regarding a particular population of individuals.

The second limitation related to the lack of diversity of participants in terms of aspects of identity related to age, class and location. All participants were students at the University of the Witwatersrand which may have limited diversity in terms of demographics, and thus data gathered. Furthermore, the fact that they were university students may have led participants to emphasize more career-focused values.

A third limitation of this study noted that there were no participants who identified as mixed-race South African Indians. Considering the diversity of the South African population and the importance of intersectionality, the underrepresentation of this cohort of individuals is a significant limitation.

The fourth set of limitations related to the use of the genogram in the research process. Time constraints served as a challenge in being able to fully collect detailed

genogram data. In the initial research proposal, one and a half hours was allocated for each participants genogram construction and data collection process. However, during the pilot interview, it became evident that this timeframe was insufficient to gather information using both research methods fully. With consent from participants before interviews, two hours were then allocated for the data collection process. However, due to variability in terms of the genogram construction processes, it was difficult to anticipate and manage the time allocated to both the genogram and the interview questions. For example, time spent on genograms needed to be adjusted for participants with larger extended family networks and to account for the depth to which each individual reflected on significant relatives. Although the obtained genogram data yielded useful information for the data analysis process, this research tool could have been better utilised had more time been dedicated to this aspect of the data collection process. This would have allowed for a more comprehensive use of this tool and would likely have enhanced the richness of the collected data.

6.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that future research be conducted with greater consideration/ focus on aspects of identity involving location and class. The participants interviewed originated from different parts of the country and this was difficult to explore fully, due to the small sample size. Additionally, previous literature on the topic of identity has highlighted the important influences of class and economic status. These were aspects that were not able to be thoroughly investigated in this research study, but would be significant in deepening knowledge and exploring the additional nuances associated with South African Indian identity.

As mentioned in the limitations section, the underrepresentation of mixed-race individuals who identify as South African Indians is considered a shortfall of this study. It is recommended that future research be conducted to include the experiences of these

individuals as part of obtaining more comprehensive and expansive understandings of identity.

The findings yielded in this research could prove beneficial to family therapists who are working with patients from the South African Indian population. Although these findings cannot be generalised, this information may prove helpful in a deeper understandings of differentiation processes and how these are embedded in individual and familial experiences of culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet



Dear student

My name is Yajnika Pillay, and I am a clinical psychology master's student in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my studies, I am required to undertake a research project. My study focuses on an exploration of the identity of South African Indian female university students. I am conducting this study under the supervision of Professor Maria Marchetti-Mercer from the department of psychology.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. Participation in the study will involve an individual interview of approximately 1 hour. With your permission, this will be recorded. As part of the interview process, a genogram or family tree will be put together by you and the researcher, with special focus on individuals you identify as being influential/important in your family history. Safety protocols linked to COVID-19 will also be adhered to at all times.

Aim of the study
The overall aim of this study is to contribute to understandings of how transgenerational family histories influence the construction of the identity of South African Indian women.

What is required of the participant and the rights of the participant?
To address the objectives of the study, I would like to recruit participants who:

i. Identify as South African Indian women

ii. Are between the ages of 18-25 years old

iii. Are registered students at the University of Witwatersrand

Before the interview, you will be instructed to construct a rough draft of a 'family tree' that spans over three generations. This should contain the names and ages of family members, with a focus on individuals you identify as being significant in your family history.

Kindly note that participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw at any point, should you wish to do so. Should you wish not to answer certain questions during the interview, you have the right to do so. Information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and stored on a password-encrypted laptop. Interview transcripts will be anonymised and viewed by my research supervisor, and only quotes from the interviews will be used in writing up the final research report. Although your information will be treated confidentially, please note that the findings may be used for academic publications or presentations. However, if the information provided should be utilised for such purposes, your name will not be disclosed at any point in the written reports or presentations and pseudonyms will be used. Information may also be

stored for future secondary analysis. Please be advised that there are no direct benefits of participating in the study, however the findings may be beneficial to the expanding of psychological research on the topic. If you wish to receive a summary of the final research report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional).

Should you be willing to participate in this study, you can contact me on my email address. Interviews will be held on campus at a time and place that is convenient to you. Prior to the interview, you will be required to give consent by providing your signature and by adding your initials on the Informed Consent form (Appendix B). In this form, your permission will also be asked to record the interview session.

In the unlikely event that you find the interview emotionally distressing in any way, counselling services will be made available at no cost through the University of Witwatersrand Emthonjeni Clinic.

Emthonjeni Clinic contact details:

Email: Paballo.lepota@wits.ac.za

Tel: 011 717 4513

You may also contact any of the national helplines:

- SADAG Mental Health Line: 011 234 4837
- Mental Health Information Line: 0800 567 567

Please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor should you have any questions, concerns or need additional information.

Researcher: yajnikapillay@gmail.com

Supervisor: Maria.Marchetti-Mercer@wits.ac.za

Additionally:
If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Thank you,



Yajnika Pillay

Appendix B: Informed consent form



I (_____--), agree to participate in the study entitled "*An Exploration of the Identity of South African Indian Female University Students: A Transgenerational Perspective,"* conducted by Yajnika Pillay who is a clinical psychology master's degree student from the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I have read the information letter explaining the purpose of this research and I agree to the following:

(Please tick the relevant options below) that:

- ☐ This research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about and what my involvement in the study entails.
- ☐ Participating in this study is voluntary.
- ☐ My interview with the researcher will be recorded using an audio recorder.
- ☐ My interview recording and transcript will be stored on a password-encrypted laptop and viewed only by the researcher and her supervisor.
- ☐ I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes from the interview in her research report.
- ☐ I agree that the information I provide may be used in an anonymised format after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers for secondary analysis, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.
- ☐ Should I wish to withdraw from the study, I can do so without any consequences at any point in time.
- ☐ I can contact the researcher and supervisor of the study, should I need any additional information.

Researcher: yajnikapillay@gmail.com

Supervisor: Maria.Marchetti-Mercer@wits.ac.za

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	**Signature**	**Date**

Appendix C: Genogram construction and interview schedule

A three-generation family genogram will be constructed. This will be constructed with a special focus on individuals who participants believe are significant to their life and/or to their broader family history.

Interview schedule:

1. What does the word 'family' mean to you?
2. What role does your family play in your life?
3. You were asked to highlight people who are significant to your life and/or to your family history. Say a little about why you've chosen each of them.
4. What are the common threads that link together women in your family?
5. Which of the women in your family do you identify most with/ are most similar to and why?
6. Tell me about any women in your family you feel you have little in common with?
7. How do you feel you are different from previous generations of women in your family?
8. What is the role of women in your family?
9. Are there any women who did not fit into the accepted family role? If yes, tell me about her/them.
10. What makes you identify as an Indian woman?
11. What parts of being Indian does your family embrace?
12. What parts of being Indian does your family dis-identify with?
13. How have these influenced your feelings about being Indian?

Appendix D: Ethics certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MCLIN/22/04**
PROJECT TITLE:	An Exploration of the Identity of South African Indian Female University Students: A Transgenerational Perspective.
INVESTIGATOR	Pillay Yajnika (2450996)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	10 June 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2024

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 11 July 2022 **CHAIRPERSON** C Harvey
(Dr Clare Harvey)

Cc: Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ ___12___/___07____/___2022____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES