


Social Justice Chatter Matters (Series 1): A Podcast-Based Exploration of South Asian Canadian Academic Perspectives

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Social Justice Chatter Matters (Series 1): A Podcast-Based Exploration of South Asian Canadian Academic Perspectives

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We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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A podcast series, “Social Justice Chatter Matters” features interviews between Dr. Manu Sharma of Thompson Rivers University and eight South Asian scholars from various disciplines and academic institutions across Canada. The podcast showcases an interdisciplinary lens on social justice education-based research and leadership through the eyes of South Asian Canadian academics. This creative reflection piece is presented as a transcript of a fluid conversation between the project lead and research assistant, where thoughts, opinions and impressions were organically shared. It is intended to provide an accessible and dialogic entry-points into considering the salient themes following listening to the podcast series, and into considering deeper questions about South Asian identity within the Academy. Moreover, this dialogue provides insights into social justice issues in education and opportunities for resistance and resilience. Primary analysis of the themes found in each podcast interview is first explored, followed by secondary analysis of the themes that cut throughout all podcasts. Secondary analysis revealed two major themes: (1) South Asian Identity and (2) Rise of the Alt-Right Movement. The first theme (South Asian Identity) encompasses four sub-themes; (1) first and second-generation; (2) self-censorship/self-erasure; (3) colonialism and complicity in white supremacy; and (4) solidarity, complicity and power/privilege.

Keywords: Diversity (Faculty), Social Justice, Postsecondary Education, Racial Identity, Qualitative Research

Introduction

This creative reflection is based upon a podcast series entitled: Social Justice Chatter Matters <https://www.socialjusticechattermatters.com>. This podcast consisted of a series of interviews with South Asian Canadian academics from institutions across Canada. The purpose of this podcast series was to capture how South Asian Canadian academics who engage in social justice education-based research identify with being South Asian in their leadership capacities and in their research portfolios. There are articles that explore the lived experiences of racialized faculty in Canada, but few focused solely on the lived experiences of South Asian academics in Canada. This podcast series tries to bridge the gap by gathering narratives and insights directly from South Asian academics who voluntarily chose to partake in this podcast project.

The podcast series has eight episodes with six female faculty members and two male faculty members. Given that each of the faculty members come from different disciplines within academia, this podcast series showcases an interdisciplinary lens on social justice education-based research and leadership through the eyes of South Asian Canadian academics. Each

episode varies in length from 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes.

The podcast participants were interviewed by Dr. Manu Sharma, is an Associate Professor at Thompson Rivers University and has been engaging with research on social justice education over the past 12 years. She identifies as a South Asian Canadian. Manu is the project lead on this podcast series and is honoured to be able to do this work that aims to expand our understanding of South Asian experiences as they relate to social justice education in the Canadian postsecondary landscape.

Natalie Avery was involved in the project as a research assistant. Natalie has a history of working in healthcare as a midwife and is currently a public-school educator who self identifies as a white settler with French Canadian and European roots. She has a passion for social justice, education, and education through story.

The purpose of this creative reflection piece is to bring forward insights on the themes that emerged for us individually (primary analysis) on each of the eight podcast episode and then to collaboratively discuss the themes that cut across all of our sixteen podcast reflections (secondary analysis). We have organized this creative piece to read like a conversation

between two colleagues to help create a space for multiple entry points that readers can have after listening to the podcast. Thus, the transcript below in the paper is based on a fluid conversation that organically brought forward different questions, thoughts, opinions and feelings about the podcast episodes. The hope is that this podcast and this creative reflection can provide a basis for encouraging a deeper conversation about South Asian Canadian academics and their identity and commitment to social justice issues in education.

Recruitment

Natalie was responsible for the recruitment and selection of the participants. She identified potential participants from a variety of universities across Canada to ensure geographical diversity, discipline based diversity and ethnic diversity. She conducted this search using Google and compiled her results in an excel spreadsheet that consisted of approximately 55 potential participants. Each of these participants were provided with a welcome letter and consent form about the project. One of the requirements necessary for participants to partake in the study was that they had to be tenured, to ensure minimal risk to their career trajectory.

We would like to take a moment to say thank you to all 8 participants who so freely shared their lived experiences, as well as their insights on research projects and initiatives in this podcast series. It was an honour and a privilege to talk to each one of them, learn from them and continue to be inspired by their work, and the leadership they have demonstrated in their various capacities.

Dr. Dhawan shares his insights as in India born professor in the University of the Fraser Valley where he teaches courses in English and South Asian Literature and continues to pursue his passion of theatre.

Dr. Dhawan Podcast 1

M: I found this episode very interesting to hear a very strong critique South Asian Canadian academics and their potential to be submerged in colonialized thinking about India. Dr. Dhawan stressed that when he encounters South Asian Canadians who often research social justice based matters he finds that there is a deficit view pushed onto those who come from India.

N: Dr. Dhawan was quite candid in his criticism of other South Asian academics, going so far as to suggest that many have internalized a colonial narrative of India. It was quite clear that he felt passionate about his love for India. Interestingly, Dr. Dhawan was one of the only participants who had grown up in India and went through his Graduate School in India prior to moving to Canada. I wonder how first and second generation South Asian Canadians differ in how they relate to their South Asian identity, based on how they form their perceptions of India and the South Asian community.

M: I recall that he mentioned how often there are even stereotypes associated with South Asians being cheap and he suggested that if we examine what happens when South Asians have wedding parties, the opposite is true as a great deal of finance goes into elaborate wedding celebrations that often go on for days to celebrate a marriage for South Asian communities.

N: He does talk specifically about a certain comedian and how that comedian represents their South Asian family. I think the most problematic part of those types of representations is the fact that very well may be that one person's experience but when that falls upon a (majority white European settler) Canadian landscape of what is heard about South Asians, it creates this narrative of the "South Asian experience" - that this is the only experience or world view that exists within the South Asian community. This of course creates and reinforces deficit minded biases.

M: Dr. Dhawan goes on to discuss about the caste system and how the caste system that people often consider to be the root of discrimination needs to be examined in the context in which it was developed. This was interesting to hear as he was pointing to acknowledging the context of the caste system and how it was connected to religious scriptures that often spoke to the need of identifying people in categories to complete different duties in a society that had multiple needs and jobs that had to be fulfilled. One point that really stood out was his desire to illustrate that South Asian literature was very progressive in its origins as he provided an example of the Mahabharat that discusses the need for sex workers to have rights, and thus he illustrated that despite what a colonial narrative towards South Asian communities and their belief systems may be, there is definitely another perspective that is worth considering.

N: This was a really interesting point - this idea of going back to the religious texts and how they illuminate conceptualizations of Indian culture prior to British colonization. At this point it's difficult to tease out what in South Asian culture was originally there or was imposed as a result of the British rule in India. Dr. Dhawan talks about how his students are always surprised when he points out these examples of progressive thought within Indian literature. This is in and of itself a confirmation of this narrative that we have that India couldn't possibly be a progressive place; rather than the commonly accepted narrative that it is more socially conservative and traditional.

Dr. Krishnamurthy Podcast 2

M: Interestingly in podcast two with Dr. Krishnamurthy, she brings forward the topic of caste privilege and she challenges us to think more about how is Hinduism production occurring and how is it taught. She also has us questioning how South Asians navigate whiteness and how they make space for who are often seen as the most vulnerable in the caste system.

N: I think it was interesting to hear about her history in being a scholar of religion and being South Asian herself but learning about Hinduism often through the lens of white academics.

M: I think it was also insightful when she spoke about her leadership responsibility and the level of intense mental and emotional labour that it required to talk to senior leaders about improving security in light of the attacks targeting women and gender studies professors in Waterloo 2023.

N: Another interesting point was how she talked about this concept of “aunties” or “auntie”-lectuals and how within the South Asian community, aunties can sometimes be those who are supporting you to be more subversive within your own community. She was quite candid about talking about the expectations within the South Asian community and how being an academic and talking about these “tough topics” placed her somewhat at the margins within that South Asian community.

M: To build on what you said Natalie I believe that the Aunties were people who could be from a variety of backgrounds, all kinds of racialized backgrounds and did not have to be South Asian which was also quite fascinating as this supported her lens on who could be a support system for her while doing this social justice education work. On another point, it was interesting to hear how she explained caste privilege and how South Asians need to be aware of their contributions to Black racism and challenge those discourses from within their own communities.

N: I feel like she was quite thoughtful and careful to position herself and acknowledge the privileges that she has within her position and how that privilege operated in getting her to where she is now. I think that she was also thoughtful in her comments about centering Dalit scholars and uplifting those voices.

Dr. Mehta Podcast 3

N: I really appreciated Dr. Mehta’s perspective from her work in the field of early childhood education. I felt like her perspective on social justice issues was quite expansive, ranging from the ways that children within care can be marginalized, to the ways in which workers and particularly South Asian racialized workers can be marginalized, as well as the issues present at the institutional level in terms of lack of supports for international students.

M: In addition to your thoughts on who is providing care and who is being cared for in the early childhood field that you mentioned, I think it was really fascinating to acknowledge that ECEs are predominantly South Asians in Ontario and the children in care in some centres are predominantly white. Dr. Mehta does shine light on this juxtaposition which begs the question about the privilege of accessing ECE and who is providing the education for the children of the ECEs themselves. She connects this thought with white supremacy and how it is

often exercised at the cost of racialized service workers in the field of early childhood education.

N: She points out that when there is a scarcity of childcare options for families, it is always those who are most vulnerable, the families that are struggling the most, who suffer from that inequity. Another point that I found interesting was the mention of multilingualism and the lack of interest or efforts in supporting retention of a home language in the case of English language learners, though there are notable cognitive benefits to supporting multilingualism.

M: On a related note, she did talk about how there needs to be more research done on the experiences of South Asian children with respect to racism and discrimination that they face in early childhood centre spaces. She also highlights a critique of South Asians with respect to the concept of shadeism, colorism, and casteism.

N: Dr. Mehta also shares her experience within the South Asian community as a woman. Dr. Mehta mentions that her career path into the Academy was not really encouraged, and she gives another example about how devastated her parents were when her brother did not follow the education trajectory that they had hoped for him in becoming a doctor. She was one of the first to explicitly discuss the tension between cultural expectations for career and marriage within the South Asian community and her own decisions and self-identity.

M: Dr. Mehta also spoke to direct experiences of micro aggressions she has experienced in her academic trajectory. In particular she named ageism as one form of discrimination she often experienced. She shared that colleagues would often call her “sweetie” and speak to her as if she was not their equal with respect to her experience or her age in this particular field.

N: She also talked about how the lack of representation and diversity sitting at leadership tables affected her and her confidence to speak up about issues she felt were important, though she points out her confidence has grown considerably over the years.

M: Lastly, she spoke to issues around curriculum missing racialized experiences: she spoke to how ages and stages development is very colonial in its roots instead of acknowledging the concept of how child development may occur in other eastern traditions and dismantling this colonial way of thinking when it comes to early childhood education.

Dr. Shah Podcast 4

M: Dr. Shah brought forward the concept of oppression Olympics and she explained it as the reason why we need to trouble terminology such as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC).

N: Dr. Shah points out how microaggressions can have macro consequences: how the on-going cumulative effects of microaggressions on a person takes a toll. She also makes some interesting points about the concept of liberation as the ability

to connect and exist in a world where folks are not pitted against one another, and social justice work as a “commitment to radical interconnectedness.”

M: Yes, I found her strategies for support when it came to the concept of liberation were structured around what she called a community of care. Another term for these communities are affinity in her words, spaces where there could be mentoring and counter narrative sharing amongst people who are doing this work across different races across different ethnicities but more importantly in an act of solidarity.

N: Yes - when you think about the history of colonialism and even specifically in India whereby colonizers would strategically exploit existing tension and conflict within a population to serve their own interests.

M: The theme of colonialism was present in Dr. Shaw's podcast. She referred to it as acknowledging the weaponization of this language, hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, and she also spoke to it in connection to what she thinks is a colonial concept entitled “equity empire”. It seemed as though, discourses of equity are seen to be colonial.

N: I believe what she called EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) initiatives was “window dressing” rather than actually doing any of the hard work for change. For example, EDI initiatives that are performative versus the types of changes that really need to happen for true structural change that supports equity and true liberation.

M: To that point Natalie, I do think even as you share this concept of true equity and true liberation, perhaps there's something to it when we consider what it would mean if we were to remove the word equity or diversity or inclusion from all policies or spaces that are designated for education.

N: I think a lot of it comes down to a kind of blissful ignorance that is a very comfortable space for those in power in institutions, with regards to racism, microaggressions, and equity issues. Decision-makers need to acknowledge the reality and the lived experience of racialized faculty. I also think that one of the keys to this would be greater representation within those leadership positions.

M: Yes, I think in that example, EDI policy would be useful and helpful in supporting marginalized communities, whereas if it did not exist, we would be fully swimming in colonized structures and procedures.

N: There is a big problem with regards to some people just not knowing what they don't know and the challenges for those doing EDI work in navigating “white fragility.” I feel like especially in certain fields within the Academy where only one form of research is recognized, or one way of knowing things, ontological supremacy is a huge barrier to true equity. Especially since racialized faculty members that are doing more subversive work are likely to be publishing in journals that are less mainstream.

M: Yes, there's definitely work that needs to be done to help further decolonize educational spaces.

Dr. Kaur Mucina Podcast 5:

N: Dr. Kaur Mucina spoke about growing up in a community where her family was one of the only South Asian families, and how she often encountered racism as a child. She shared her experience as being the first point of contact when her grandmother was accessing public services, as one of the fluent English speakers in her family. She talked about how filtering out racism in an effort to shield family members impacted her perception of the world and her trust in others.

M: Natalie your point on protecting other family members from racism I recall that after re-listening to the podcast and I remember that Dr. Kaur Mucina shared that part of this was building an incredible resistance and determining a safe space for being South Asian. She suggested that it was important to hold multiple truths and reveal only what we need to two our elders in our community members with the outcome of preserving what it means to be a South Asian in Canada and holding onto cultural identity that otherwise may be seen as something shameful in the Canadian landscape. An example she offers is she did not want to make her grandmother feel invisible when racist remarks were being made and she was leaving them out of translation when they were accessing health care services. Another example she gives is how she protected her family from giving up their cultural traditions and celebrations when remarks were made about the differences is that South Asians hold in contrast to Canadian values and traditions. She wanted to ensure that there was an opportunity to uphold South Asian identity despite the racism in the interactions that she and her family encountered.

N: Yes, viewing that filtering or choosing to withhold some information as an act of resistance and to protect her family cultural identity was really interesting. Rarely do we talk about how abstaining from sharing or from saying something can be an act of resistance. The other thing that she spoke about was in the context of her work and research within social work and how she spent time looking at family violence and also the ways in which South Asian women are regulated, not only within the South Asian community but also by the white gaze. She also talked about how her research has looked at how South Asian women are able to navigate that and also how they are able to find spaces within that hold potential for resistance.

M: She directly stated that patriarchy in the South Asian culture impacts directly on the identity of South Asian women and the level of harm and its implications on women and their livelihood are noteworthy. She further goes to talk about gender based violence in South Asian communities because she finds that South Asians are not able to control the narrative of South Asians in the colonial society embedded in Canada and as a result they turn inwards and create violence in their homes and the women who often are subject to this violence are faced with challenges that they must show a strong level of resilience and resistance to.

N: Dr. Kaur Mucina also mentions her struggle with impostor syndrome within the Academy. Impostor syndrome is something that has been well documented in terms of female experiences within research and graduate studies but clearly this also echoes within Dr. Kaurs experience as a racialized faculty member. I think this underscores the importance of diverse representation within institutions and how this affects what we internalize about our own potential.

M: She went on to speak about more than once her self-reflective process on colonialization of self and others and she made it a point to talk about how we are complicit in our part as South Asians within Canadian colonialism which really made me pause and think.

Dr. Sivia Podcast 6

N: Dr. Sivia shared some of the ways in which she has been able to use her influence as a leader in her institution to change some of the ways decisions are being made within the institution and trying to tackle equity issues that way.

M: Dr. Sivia also spoke to the need for racialized immigrants to have space in the dialogue of the reconciliation process between Indigenous and white people which often is the main audience for the reconciliation process. She however believes that racialized immigrants do have something additional to share and their narratives in this process should be considered and heard.

N: She points out that South Asian communities have not typically been invited into the conversations talking about truth and reconciliation, however; with their own history of having been a colonized nation, she feel like their perspective is quite valuable and should be sought out more often.

M: The other piece that really stood out from Dr. Sivia's podcast was her concern about the context and state of the world after COVID being an angry world she spoke about how in this "angry world" we have anger on our bodies and it is creating a mental health crisis amongst many communities and this has further led to divisive factions that have polarized views towards social justice education which in turn have rippling effects on all communities.

N: The other thing that Dr. Sivia pointed out was the lack of representation within teacher education of the South Asian community. Especially in a region that is overwhelmingly South Asian and where we would expect there to be a higher percentage of South Asians represented within teacher education programs, she is still not seeing that in her classes.

M: That statistic itself begs the question of what is happening to South Asian Canadians - how does it feel to be living in a hyphenated space as she calls it. Do South Asians feel that they are not Canadian enough to be part of the Canadian education system or is there a different explanation as to why they are not being reflected in teacher education programs given the high level of diversity and student demographics that come from South Asian origins in our current schools. She did speak

very briefly about how amongst South Asians there is a safe space to talk about microaggressions and now that she has this perceived power or authority in her leadership position, she feels that she is empowered to have her identity walk in before her.

N: Although she talked about perceived power in her position, she also talked about her identity walking into the room before her as a barrier of sorts, that a lot of assumptions were made about who she was based on her cultural identity.

On the topic of social justice education, she discussed the need for this to be infused not only in the fields where it is taught and researched, but also in fields where faculty members might not be thinking of it at all.

M: On that point she spoke about the need for having a supportive network while doing this work. She spoke about there being some solidarity across racialized faculty who also experienced lateral violence so in response she calls for the concept of relationality and empathetic communication to support one another as we create spaces in higher education spaces for different perspectives beyond the traditional colonial Eurocentric views that often find themselves living there.

N: I think this was a strong point in terms of how we can try to make actual progress in social justice conversations. Thinking about how to effectively teach about power, privilege and the ways in which the different pieces of our identities intersect is something I'm interested in. I think being thoughtful about how we have those conversations and how we can kind of nudge the needle forward towards a deeper understanding of one another's lived experiences is important especially in spaces such as pre-service teacher education.

Dr. Vedam Podcast 7

M: Dr. Vedam spoke very deeply to her roots in values and cultural traditions and ways of knowing that she received from her mom and family while she was young. She spoke about the importance of South Asian communities regardless of their ethnic differences and religious differences to come together to create a space where they could maintain their culture and traditions. In our podcast she emphasized the importance of acknowledging cultural clothing and respecting and loving people regardless of the differences or in the face of discrimination or in the face of being othered due too mainstream culture that did not account for cultural and heritage based differences.

N: I think Dr. Vedam spoke quite explicitly about South Asian identity and what it meant to her. She spoke about how the concept of "dharma" or doing good work was influential in shaping who she has become and the work that she's involved in.

M: She also quoted from the Gita with respect to the principle of nonviolent action when she was addressing the concept of white supremacy. In her examples of how she dealt with racial discrimination she often spoke to choosing the most

effective way of addressing discrimination by calling the aggressor in instead of calling the aggressor out.

N: She also talked about how one of the strategies she has used with dealing with microaggressions has been at times to recruit allies that are peers of the aggressors to confront that aggressor rather than herself having to say something in the moment. She also talked about her ability to counter microaggression and racism has increased over the years. She spoke about how earlier in her career she would not have felt comfortable to name racism or at least not as comfortable as she is now.

M: Two of the key intersectional identity factors that she spoke to in her podcast were socioeconomic status and race and she shared the prevalence of these two identity factors and how they impact immigrants, refugees, those who have been incarcerated, with respect to how they access the public health care system.

N: Within midwifery education, Dr. Vedam discusses the importance of antiracism and social justice education being woven throughout the curriculum rather than simply being a single isolated course or workshop, which I believe is important. We know that the public health care system is a site of systemic racism and we also know that this contributes to racialized individuals not feeling safe when accessing care. In healthcare education programs, often students are going out into the field within the system early on in practicums and witnessing racism. This is one way that racism persists within the healthcare system: it is easily reproduced and passed down from one generation of healthcare workers to the next. Teaching pre-service healthcare staff and providers about culturally safe care should absolutely be a priority within education programs.

Dr. Parasram Podcast 8

N: Dr. Parasram talked about his experience in being a “diversity hire” - that is to say, that he was hired at a university in the maritimes as part of an equity diversity initiative, and this was made very public in a very crass way by news reporters according to him. He points out that in his experience, he has often been asked to be the voice of the racialized faculty member on various equity/diversity committees, as well as being the touchstone for many racialized students who are looking for allies. One of the examples he talked about was taking on an initiative regarding how to talk about the Israeli Palestine conflict in classes with professors. He talked about how this work is a part of this “shadow job” that a racialized faculty member is not only expected but also compelled to take on.

M: Another key insight that Dr. Parasram shared was around his understanding of structural white supremacy as foundational to all policies procedures and educational endeavors in the institution. One example he gave was how to maintain white supremacy universities often hire a vice president of eq-

uity diversity and inclusion instead of three tenure track faculty who can work collaboratively together and transform the work.

N: Another topic he discussed was the way in which he feels South Asians are inhabiting this kind of middle ground within white supremacy where they experience some benefits of the racist assumptions that are made about South Asians. He spoke about how this made it easier for him to synthesize some of the more radical ideas about white supremacy and to a form that was more accessible for white Canadians. He also talked about how he had run a “white fragility” clinic and a youtube series he had been a part of producing called “Safe Space for White Questions.”

M: He also shared personal narratives about his five year old daughter and how she has faced microaggressions for bringing in South Asian food for lunch and her ability to acknowledge at the age of 2.5 years old that she wished she had white skin.

N: When raising children I think there is a really pervasive misconception that talking about inequity or white supremacy or racism is not appropriate until a certain age.

M: He also took a unique approach in addressing cultural appropriation in contrast to racial solidarity. Dr. Parasram believed that if people’s perceptions of him lead them to believe he was Muslim and they attached that to a negative or positive connotation he had no problem embodying that identity in hopes of showing racial solidarity across different ethnic and racialized groups.

N: One other point that Dr. Parasram made was about the importance of South Asian faculty members to connect with their local communities and the Indigenous people upon whose territory an institution occupied. I really found it interesting when he talked about that example where one of his classes were learning about land rights and the sovereignty of the Mikmaq people versus the laws of Canadian society and corporate land ownership.

M: A contentious point potentially that Dr. Parasram makes in his podcast is the concept of model minority that partakes in Canadian nationalism and is an extension of colonialism and this also made me pause and think who owns this label of model minority whose interpretation and knowledge of what it means to be a model minority is the initiator of such a term. I wonder if South Asians are considered to be model minorities through the gaze of whiteness and white supremacy and how that gets taken up when considering the level of complicity that they might have or not in Canadian nationalism or colonialism that continues to perpetuate in educational spaces.

N: Dr. Parasram also talked about how newcomer South Asian community members were often invited into Canadian right-wing nationalism, in part because of more traditionally conservative cultural values.

Secondary analysis

This secondary analysis was done after re-reading the reflections and insights provided by both of us above. After review-

ing the 16 interviews independent reflections we then analyzed core themes that emerged. There are two major themes and the first theme has four sub-themes; (1) South Asian Identity-first generation, second generation; (2) self-censorship or self-erasure; (3) colonialism and complicity in white supremacy; solidarity, complicity and power/privilege, (4) rise of the alt right movement.

South Asian Identity

N: OK, so now lets look the themes that we discovered when comparing all the conversations throughout the podcast series. Let's start with South Asian identity and how this came up in conversations. Originally this was a focus and a point of interest for this podcast, specifically how South Asian identity comes up in faculty members work within the Academy.

M: Part of the reason for doing this podcast series was to understand South Asian identity and how it is present or not present or challenged within the academic post-secondary institutions across Canada. It is essential that we ask ourselves, as the researchers of this podcast, what is the theme around South Asian identity that came out of these eight different podcast interviews? And it is with this question we lead into our thematic analysis of the podcast series.

N: When comparing the South Asian identity discussions and how people talked about their own South Asian identity there was a lot of variety in how much participants discussed the importance of their South Asian identity. Some shared easily about their identity, and others shared more about how they found themselves as "different" or on the margins of their South Asian community.

Sub-theme: 1st and 2nd generation South Asian Immigrants. N: When you compare the 1st and the 2nd generation South Asian immigrants this difference is particularly noticeable. Dr. Dhawan, for example, and Dr. Vedam, shared quite a bit about their South Asian identity with obvious affection. Dr. Vedam shared how her values and her interest in social justice and how she fell into midwifery work, came from the Hindu values instilled in her by her South Asian parents.

M: I did feel when reflecting on 1st generation South Asian immigrants, Dr. Dhawan's transcript shows that he had a very asset-based approach towards being an Indian and towards South Asian cultural identity as a Hindu. Interestingly though, he did not do a deep dive on his own positionality as a Hindu male, presumably from a wealthier caste. However, he did articulate values and actions that are present in classic Hindu texts that showed his commitment and his pride in being a South Asian person and scholar. In contrast, Dr. Vedam (also a 1st generation South Asian immigrant) spoke about wearing her cultural identity and upholding her cultural values in every interaction she had. In her career trajectory, she spoke about the sari. She spoke about having respect and not creating tension or negative interactions between her superiors and her, and this showed her level of humility and alignment with some

of the more traditional cultural values South Asian communities uphold.

On the flip side, there were conversations had by second generation South Asian immigrants that critiqued South Asian identity with respect to the caste system and the patriarchy-based lens that often is present in South Asian culture. These critiques were strongly made by Dr. Krishnamurthy and Dr. Kaur Mucina, who spoke at great length about problematizing the caste system and patriarchy. Another interesting insight that developed on this critique lens, but was more introspective was Dr. Mehta and Dr. Sivia, sharing of personal narratives where they spoke about how cultural microaggressions were often based on their identity as perceived by people in the Academy.

N: I felt like Dr. Mehta in particular spoke about her South Asian identity as being different than her parents as she was navigating Canadian society and culture while discovering how she fit in.

M: Lastly, Dr. Parasram and Dr. Shah took this level of critique to a deeper level by sharing their thoughts on South Asians being embedded in maintaining white supremacy and they need to be aware of their own identity's being complicit in maintaining different forms of discrimination that are structural and sometimes even relational.

Sub-theme: Self-censorship or Self-Erasure. M: This opportunity to think back on everyone's transcripts and their own South Asian identity has made me realize that South Asian identity is not seen uniformly, and not everyone speaks about their own personal positionality as a South Asian, but often seemed to be more comfortable talking about South Asian identity as something outside of them that they could critique, or they could see needs to be challenged and this was true for almost six out of eight of the participants, in my opinion. Which leaves me with a question of, how are Canadian South Asian academics centering or decentering or not mentioning their own positionality in their day-to-day interactions in academia. As a South Asian academic myself within Canada, I have found it very difficult to bring up my own identity, my own culture, my own positionality. In Canadian academic spaces, being South Asian is not seen to be a major point of interest or strategic priority that institutions across Canada wish to address or acknowledge at this point in its current political context.

N: Given that the faculty members that participated in the podcast series were limited to faculty members that had reached tenure positions, I also wonder if there could be a level of self-censorship or self-erasure within that process that South Asian academics go through or perform in order to reach success within academic institutions.

This brings me to a greater question about South Asian identity where are narratives about what it means to be South Asian formed? Why is it that those faculty members who grew up in Canada are more likely to criticize South Asian iden-

tity or speak of the tension between South Asian community expectations and how they position themselves?

Sub-theme: Colonialism and Complicity in White Supremacy. M: Natalie, those are very interesting questions that you have offered, and I think part of it is to acknowledge the fact that in Canada we have gone through colonial structures and are often subjected to colonial policies and procedures, not only as academics, but as students who might have gone through the public education system as well. Given this backdrop, it is important to recognize that we might be influenced by colonial thinking. However, I am not sure about the notion of complicity, that came up in a number of the podcasts, in particular in Dr. Shaw's and Dr. Parasram, who spoke about our complicity in maintaining white supremacy as South Asians. What did you think about the question of South Asians being complicit in maintaining white supremacy in Canada?

N: Yeah, that's an interesting question. I think one of the most striking points that came out of Dr. Parasram's podcast was when he used the imagery of white supremacy as a life raft. It was a powerful image to explain how the structures of white supremacy are something that South Asians can cling to, but they'll never be allowed onto the life raft, and never fully benefit from white supremacy. I do think that the concept of "model minority" that is often associated with South Asians can benefit South Asians in ways that other racialized groups might not experience. Dr. Krishnamurthy specifically talked about pervasive anti-Black racism present within the South Asian community and that she herself has to be careful about not inadvertently being responsible for microaggressions.

M: To go further with this conversation, I wonder if I could share some thoughts out loud... When we think about complicity. Does it mean that somebody is to blame or is responsible for maintaining white supremacy? Is it the creation of white supremacy in all of its forms and its entirety or is it partially a responsibility/blame that is shared in different capacities? This would in turn mean everyone is complicit in the process.

This further has me wondering about the difference between complicity and solidarity. Solidarity to me is a wonderful way to bring people together. To support one another in the face of oppression that each of us. However, if we go back to complicity, this really makes me wonder if solidarity and complicity can be interconnected?

Sub-theme: Solidarity, Complicity, and Power/Privilege. N: Solidarity and complicity are interconnected in that one of the ways that individuals with privilege can counter being complicit within a system that benefits them is by standing as allies in solidarity with marginalized communities. In terms of responsibility, I don't know if it's that productive to consider whether being complicit or benefiting completely confers responsibility. Many white individuals who benefit immensely from white supremacy and how it operates within institutions would also claim to have no responsibility for these systems

being the way they are. However, I would say that if they are not questioning how power and privilege operate in these spaces while simultaneously benefitting, they are complicit. In order for any of us to hope for real change when it comes to dismantling the structures that uphold white supremacy, I think ultimately we all need to examine our own individual positionalities and how they benefit us, while standing in solidarity with those in our communities that hold less agency and power.

M: I think the discourse around privilege is definitely something that I can agree upon with you, Natalie. However, complicity in maintaining white supremacy, I feel is going to another level. To better explain this, here is my thinking: Often South Asians are seen as a model minority, and this concept of model minority has gotten them through the doors often in academia in a post-secondary space. I challenge this notion of model minority because it is one that was never created by South Asians themselves. Yet it was within the white gaze of white people who hold up white supremacy structures, policies, procedures that always benefit them in their fullest benefit that have created the term model minority.

So I'm trying to challenge this idea that South Asians, who are seen as model minorities through a white gaze are complicit in white supremacy because it doesn't seem as though South Asians have full benefits from being part of "White supremacy" as they still suffer from microaggressions and they still don't actually bring in their full cultural positionality into post-secondary spaces. As mentioned previously, their identities are often not even seen or heard as part of the conversation in post-secondary institutions in Canada. At least based on these eight interviews that we have had the honor and privilege of hearing from. It is with these thoughts I am concerned. About whose knowledge is counting for interpretations of model minority and who is truly benefitting to its fullest extent from white supremacy. This just brings me full circle back to this idea of whether South Asian academics in the Canadian post-secondary landscape seem to be equal in their ability to make decisions even in leadership positions, as their counterparts who are white? And I do not think this is something that any South Asian Canadian who is in academia can wholeheartedly say yes to.

N: You are right about that. Specifically, Dr. Shah in her interview mentioned how she felt very much unsupported and unprotected by her institution. Another point is that Dr. Sivia, who was in the highest position in terms of leadership at her institution, described her power in that space as "perceived" power. This makes me wonder what she means exactly by perceived power? Is it that she doesn't feel like she has true power? A lot of the faculty members that were interviewed also talked about the problem of being a tokenized racialized faculty member and also, Dr. Parasram mentions having to navigate white fragility when sitting at those tables where decisions are made.

Rise of the Alt Right Movement

N: One of the other themes that was discovered when looking more closely at the podcast interviews was how often the growing alt right movement was brought up within the podcasts. Dr. Krishnamurthy talks about security concerns at the university for faculty members who are teaching and researching “tough” subjects such as gender studies and critical race theory. Dr. Sivia attributes this to conversations around equity falling onto an already angry landscape. Dr. Parasram specifically talks about how South Asians are targeted by this kind of nationalistic movement and being exploited for holding more conservative or traditional social values. Dr. Shah considers it an inevitable and expected reaction in the cycle of anti-oppression/oppression and mentions that in essence many elements are an anti-public education movement.

M: This conversation around the current context is especially important to acknowledge as we see world leaders who have very conservative views and are now showing strong movements against equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. It is important to acknowledge the work and identity of South Asian people in this geopolitical context, given that they’re not central characters, but are in positions with some limited power and privilege that can be used to create solidarity and to preserve their cultural heritage and identity. I am not sure what the future holds. However, if the conversations around South Asian identity are missing right now in the Canadian landscape of post-secondary institutions with respect to being South Asian as an individual, but not speaking to it directly in a way that South Asian identity is seen and understood uniquely as a community of its own; I’m not sure it’s going to stand up against such a strong alt right movement. And there might be a possibility of blurring cultural identity in a more homogeneous way with colonial thinking and inheriting and adapting to a colonial identity, in order to survive.

N: I wonder how much of that is happening as we speak.

M: I think given these levels of anxiety which are normal in this geopolitical context, it is important to also take a moment to acknowledge the theme of support systems that academics who are South Asians have spoken about highly in their interviews. It is noteworthy to share that Dr. Shah, Dr. Dhawan, Dr. Vedam, Dr. Sivia, Dr. Mehta, Dr. Krishnamurthy, Dr. Kaur Mucina, and Dr. Parasram all spoke highly of having support

systems across multiple marginalized and racialized groups to show not only their solidarity, but draw strength and support from them. It was amazing to see how all of the podcast participants valued and relished in the relational resilience that they found as a common theme across the work they were doing in social justice education.

N: Many of them mentioned relationships as a source of resilience. Many of them discussed the importance of having a network built through the connections in their own academic community with other racialized faculty members as well as non-racialized allies from which to draw support while doing this work. Many of them described the ability to be able to vent about microaggressions to others who understand as an important way to cope with encountering microaggressions. Another source of resilience that came up a few times was through reading the work coming from other racialized academics within the same field, and how this was an important source of strength and inspiration.

M: In retrospect, after thinking about the individual podcast interviews and now reflecting on the themes that go across in terms of the similarities and differences between them, I found that this podcast series has been helpful for me to better understand the context of South Asian identity in Canadian post-secondary institutions. I also was surprised at the gap in the knowledge of how South Asian academics speak to their own positionality within the work that they do on social justice education. It is amazing work that all of the 8 scholars interviewed are doing in their own institutions. It is also fantastic to see the diverse levels of support they have across different marginalized communities. I can only hope that this podcast will have all South Asian academics, which are very few across Canada, think about how they hold their personal positionality in their workplace on a regular basis. Questions like the following would be ones that I would want people to carry with them: Do I share my South Asian identity freely in the initiatives I take on at the university? Do I support the South Asian community in a mentoring or educational based initiative? How do I learn more about my identity and how it and its history contributes to the conversations around colonialism, or more importantly, decolonization and complicity, or, more importantly, solidarity across multiple communities?, and lastly: How does the South Asian culture, community or identity contribute in any way to social justice education?