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Struggles for identity formation: second-generation South Asian diaspora overseas

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ABSTRACT

The second-generation South Asian diaspora, made up of individuals whose parents were born as immigrants in a foreign country, often faces unique and complex challenges in forming and reconciling their identities. This article attempts to shed light on the difficulties faced by second-generation South Asians in foreign communities, highlighting the greater identity problems compared to the third and fourth generations. The identity problems of second generation South Asians arise from their position at the crossroads of two cultures. They struggle with the tension between their ancestral roots and the dominant culture of their adopted country, which can lead to a profound sense of confusion. Unlike third- and fourth-generation people, who have a more solid sense of identity, second-generation people often find themselves caught between two worlds, leading to a range of psychological, social, and cultural challenges.

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Introduction

The South Asian diaspora has evolved into one of the most dynamic and complex trans-national communities in the world today. This diaspora, which includes people from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, has been shaped by historical migrations triggered by factors such as colonialism, labour opportunities and political conflict (Werbner 2005). In this diverse diaspora, second-generation South Asian immigrants born and raised in a foreign country face particular challenges in the search for their identity (Raghuram 2004; Vertovec 2001). This article explores the multifaceted struggles of second-generation South Asians in overseas diaspora communities and highlights the complexities of their identity formation.

Identity formation is a dynamic and multi-layered process that is influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural, social, economic and political contexts. For second-generation South Asians living abroad, the negotiation of identity is particularly complicated due to the interplay between the cultural heritage of their ancestors and the culture of the host country (Iwamoto et al. 2013). Scholars have found that these individuals often straddle multiple worlds, attempting to reconcile their ethnic, cultural and

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religious roots with the dominant culture of their adopted country (Modood 2005; Raghuram 2004). This balancing act can lead to a number of challenges, including issues of belonging, self-identification and a sense of cultural authenticity.

The struggles of second generation South Asians in overseas diaspora communities are a topic of growing scholarly interest. I draw on the existing literature to examine how issues such as racism, discrimination, cultural hybridity, and generational conflict impact the identity formation of this cohort (Bacchus 2020). I examine how factors such as religion, gender and socioeconomic status intersect with their experiences. By comprehensively analysing these factors, this paper aims to shed light on the complicated process of identity formation for second-generation South Asians in the South Asian diaspora abroad.

The research attempts to fill a critical gap in our understanding of the challenges and identity formation processes faced by this particular group within the South Asian diaspora. While numerous studies have examined the general experiences of South Asian immigrants and their descendants, there is little research that specifically addresses the struggles of the second generation in negotiating their dual cultural heritage (Louie 2006; Rajan and Ullah 2023; Ullah 2017; 2023; Ullah and Kumpoh 2019). The existing literature often tends to summarise South Asian communities or focuses primarily on the experiences of first-generation immigrants.

For example, studies examining the South Asian diaspora in the United States have primarily focused on the experiences of first-generation immigrants, leaving a significant gap in knowledge about the particular identity issues faced by their American-born children (Farver et al. 2007; Juang et al. 2018). Similarly, past research on British South Asians has focused on issues related to immigration and settlement, largely ignoring the complicated processes of identity formation in the second generation.

While identity studies have received considerable attention within diaspora studies more broadly, there is a lack of comprehensive research that specifically addresses how second-generation South Asians find their cultural, racial, religious and national identities in various host countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. These countries have seen a sharp increase in South Asian immigration over the decades (Ullah and Huque 2014), resulting in a sizable and increasingly influential second-generation population that struggles with particular identity issues due to their multicultural upbringing and transnational connections (Werbner 1997).

This study attempts to fill this gap by applying a multidimensional framework of analysis to uncover the intricate layers of identity struggles faced by second-generation people in the South Asian diaspora. It sheds light on their unique experiences, challenges and the strategies they employ to develop a coherent sense of self in an ever-evolving globalised world (Bhatia and Ram 2001). It aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these people reconcile their South Asian heritage with the cultural, social and political contexts of their host countries, offering valuable insights into the complexities of diasporic identity formation.

This article is significant in the field of diaspora studies, cultural anthropology and sociology as it explores the multi-layered challenges faced by second generation South Asian diaspora expatriates and the complex interplay of identity, acculturation and cultural preservation. This is important in today's global society. The South Asian diaspora is one of the largest and most diverse immigrant groups in the world, with significant

communities in North America, Europe, Australia and beyond (Ullah 2013). Understanding the struggles and successes of second-generation South Asians is critical for policy makers, educators and community leaders to address the unique challenges of this population.

This study enriches the scholarly discussion on identity formation in a multicultural environment and focuses in particular on the experiences of second-generation South Asians who often mediate between the cultural norms of their ancestors and those of their host country. The article illuminates the processes through which these individuals cultivate hybrid identities characterised by a fusion of cultural practises, beliefs and values, highlighting the complexity inherent in their identity formation. These insights extend beyond the population under study and offer broader implications for examining the dynamics of identity formation and the evolving landscape of multiculturalism in different social contexts.

This article contributes to our understanding of multiculturalism, identity and social integration by highlighting the intricate mechanisms through which individuals locate cultural pluralism and negotiate their sense of belonging within heterogeneous communities. By explaining the strategies that second-generation South Asians employ to reconcile divergent cultural influences, the study emphasises the importance of fostering an inclusive environment that allows for diverse expressions of identity.

Importantly, this study offers actionable insights for policy and social decision makers seeking a more inclusive and harmonious society. By highlighting the complexity of identity formation and the challenges of managing cultural plurality, the study provides information for the development of strategies and initiatives to promote social cohesion and equal integration in multicultural contexts. Thus, this research not only contributes to academic discourse, but also provides practical guidance for actors working to promote inclusive and cohesive communities in the midst of cultural diversity.

Methodology

Scholars in this field draw on a range of theoretical frameworks, including acculturation theory, cultural studies, and intersectionality (Ullah 2022), to analyse the multilayered experiences of second-generation diasporas. Researchers can uncover patterns in identity struggles and shed light on issues such as discrimination, cultural preservation, family dynamics, and the role of transnational connections. In this way, this research not only enriches academic knowledge, but also offers practical implications for promoting greater understanding, tolerance and social cohesion in an increasingly diverse world.

I designed the methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex identity struggles faced by the second generation diaspora. Therefore, a critical analysis of existing relevant research was important to form the basis of the research and provide a comprehensive review of the academic literature to identify gaps, trends and key themes in the field of diaspora studies, identity formation and second generation experiences within South Asian communities.

The research incorporates an experiential approach to analysis that involves an in-depth examination of the personal narratives, memoirs, and creative expressions of second-generation South Asians, allowing for the assessment of their lived experiences, challenges, and evolving identities. These narratives offer valuable insights into the

emotional and subjective dimensions of identity struggles and help contextualise the broader scholarly findings. Through the inclusion of personal narratives and first-hand accounts, as well as my previous interviews with second and third generation participants, the study gives voice to the unique experiences and challenges of the second generation, adding to the overall depth and richness of the study's findings. By combining critical analysis, experiential analysis and interviews, this research methodology takes a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to shed light on the multi-layered identity struggles of second-generation people in the overseas South Asian diaspora. The study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in diaspora studies while providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of identity formation in this particular population group.

The critical literature review for this research typically involves a systematic and rigorous approach. I began by searching key databases, such as academic journals, books and other relevant sources. I used search terms tailored to the specific focus of the study, including keywords related to identity, cultural assimilation, migration, and South Asian diaspora. I then explore the literature and critically evaluate each source for its relevance, reliability and theoretical framework. This includes assessing the methods used, the quality of the data collected and the depth of the analysis. I paid close attention to whether there were any biases or limitations in the literature. Through this comprehensive review, I have gained insights into the diverse experiences and challenges faced by second-generation South Asians in locating their cultural identity in the context of overseas diasporic communities.

Theoretical debates

The theory of identity, which has its roots in philosophy and psychology, assumes that the mind and the brain are identical, which means that mental processes can be equated with neuronal processes. This theory states that mental states, such as thoughts, feelings and consciousness, can be reduced to and fully explained by corresponding brain states (Usher et al. 2023). One of the most important proponents of identity theory is U.T. Place (1988), who introduced it in the 1950s, and J.J.C. Smart (1961), who developed the theory further. They argued that mental events are nothing more than physical events that take place in the brain and that there is no need for a separate realm of non-physical entities to explain consciousness. Although the identity theory has been criticised for its apparent simplification of the relationship between mind and brain, it has influenced subsequent discussions in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. The theory has evolved over time, incorporating insights from neuroscience and addressing some of its initial shortcomings. Today, identity theory remains an important framework for understanding the relationship between mind and brain.

Identity theory, particularly in the context of diaspora, explores the complex interplay between individual and collective identities in dispersed communities. Diaspora, defined as the migration or dispersion of a group of people from their ancestral homeland, presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for identity formation (Kataoka 2019). Scholars such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Avtar Brah (1996) have contributed significantly to the discourse on diasporic identity by emphasising its fluid and dynamic nature. Identity theory assumes that identity is not fixed, but is constructed through ongoing

processes of negotiation, adaptation and interaction. In the diaspora, individuals move between their original cultural roots and the society of the host country, which leads to the emergence of hybrid identities that reflect a fusion of different influences. The negotiation of identity in the diaspora is not only an individual experience, but also a collective endeavour as communities grapple with the preservation of cultural heritage while coming to terms with the realities of their new environment (Hack-Polay, Rahman, and Bal 2023). This theoretical framework illuminates the complex ways in which diasporic individuals and communities shape and redefine their identities in response to the complexities of displacement and multicultural encounters.

The second-generation South Asian diaspora, commonly defined as individuals born and raised abroad to South Asian immigrant parents, has been a focal point of theoretical discourse within diaspora studies (Sarwal 2014). This discourse revolves around the intricate nuances of their identity formation, encompassing cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. Scholars have engaged in multifaceted discussions, drawing upon various theoretical frameworks to illuminate the complexities inherent in the experiences of this generation. Acculturation theory, which examines the processes of cultural adaptation and integration, offers insights into how second-generation South Asians negotiate their dual cultural heritage (Berry 1997). Transnationalism theory, on the other hand, explores the interconnectedness between homeland and host country, elucidating how transnational practices shape the identities and affiliations of diasporic communities (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992). Additionally, the concept of hybridity, rooted in postcolonial theory, underscores the blending of multiple cultural influences and identities, highlighting the fluid and dynamic nature of second-generation South Asian identity formations (Bhabha 1994). Identity politics theory interrogates the power dynamics and social inequalities that inform the construction of identities within diasporic contexts, shedding light on the socio-political dimensions of identity negotiation among second-generation South Asians (Hall 1996). Through the lens of these diverse theoretical perspectives, scholars endeavor to unravel the intricate tapestry of identity and belonging among the second-generation South Asian diaspora.

Acculturation theory is an important framework for understanding the experiences of the second generation South Asian diaspora overseas (Ullah 2022). This theoretical perspective emphasises the processes of cultural adaptation and assimilation that occur when people from one culture come into contact with another. Researchers have examined how second-generation South Asians navigate the tension between preserving their cultural heritage and integrating into the host society. Some argue that they are under pressure to assimilate, while others emphasise the resilience of cultural identity and maintenance within diasporic communities (Berry 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2001a; 2001b).

Transnationalism has emerged as a significant theoretical perspective in the study of second-generation diasporas, emphasising their multiple, interconnected social spaces and affiliations. Scholars argue that identities are not limited to a single national or cultural framework, but are shaped by transnational experiences, including familial ties, travel and media consumption. The transnational perspective recognises the fluidity of identity and challenges traditional notions of fixed cultural belonging (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Hybridity theory, influenced by postcolonial thinking, suggests that the identities of second-generation South Asians are hybrid and constantly evolving. This perspective

views their identities as products of complex interactions between different cultural, social and historical influences (Nziba Pindi 2018). Scholars claim that hybrid identities are not necessarily a loss of cultural authenticity, but rather a creative synthesis of different elements (Bhabha 1994; Brah 1996).

In the discourse on the second-generation South Asian diaspora, identity politics is a salient aspect that prompts scholars to examine how individuals from this population engage in activism and advocacy rooted in their diasporic experiences. Within this discourse, different perspectives emerge, reflecting different interpretations of the experiences and responses of second-generation South Asians. Advocates claim that experiences of discrimination and marginalisation catalyse the formation of robust political identities that focus on issues such as racism, multiculturalism and social justice (Maira 2009). Conversely, the tendency to essentialise identity is criticised and instead a more nuanced understanding is argued for that recognises the heterogeneity of experiences and viewpoints within this demographic cohort (Bhachu 2005). Scholars utilise a range of theoretical frameworks that include acculturation theory, transnationalism, hybridity and identity politics to examine the complexities of their experiences and identities. These ongoing debates contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which second-generation South Asians navigate the complexities of their dual cultural contexts and shape their identities in the diaspora.

Underlying analytical issues

Analysing the identity of the second generation diaspora requires a nuanced and multi-layered approach, which is underlined by the integration of a comprehensive analytical framework. The complexity involved in describing the identity of second-generation people in the diaspora requires multiple analytical investigations that interweave cultural, social and psychological dimensions (Vertovec 2000). As descendants of immigrants in the host country, these individuals struggle with a hybrid identity that emerges at the interface between their cultural heritage and the socio-cultural milieu of the host society (Brah and Coombs 2000; Hall 1990). The study of second-generation identity in the diaspora aims to shed light on the complicated dynamics resulting from the tension between the preservation of ancestral traditions and the imperative to assimilate into mainstream culture (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Parekh 2000). At the centre of this analysis is the question of the notion of belonging, dual cultural belonging and the process of negotiation between different cultural worlds, all of which are central to understanding the intricacies of their identity formation. Scholars such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Homi Bhabha (1994) have contributed significantly to the analytical discourse on diasporic identity by emphasising the fluid and dynamic nature of identity construction.

The cultural identity of second-generation people in the diaspora is a complex interplay of their ancestral heritage and the culture of the host country as they navigate the challenges of balancing traditional values with the influences of their new environment. I seek to examine the extent to which second-generation people in the South Asian diaspora have integrated into the host culture while maintaining their cultural roots (Berry 2003), and explore how people negotiate their South Asian heritage with the dominant culture to create hybrid identities (Bhabha 1994; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999).

The racial and ethnic identity of second-generation people in the diaspora is a complex interplay of cultural heritage, acculturation processes, and social experiences that shapes a unique sense of self in the tension between their ancestral roots and the cultural influences of the host society. I seek to analyse the racial dynamics experienced by second-generation South Asians in the host country and their impact on their identity formation, and examine their participation in South Asian ethnic communities and organisations (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a; 2001b).

The religious identity of second-generation people in the diaspora is shaped by the interplay of cultural heritage, familial influences, and the broader social context, and reflects a complex synthesis of tradition and adaptation in their spiritual beliefs and practises. I examine how second-generation South Asians engage with their religious heritage and practises in the diaspora (Vertovec 2000) and how interactions with other religious groups shape their religious identity.

The generational and gendered identities of second-generation people in the diaspora reflect a complex interplay between the cultural heritage of their immigrant parents, the values of the host society, and their own experiences that shapes a nuanced understanding of identity at the intersection of generational and gendered dynamics. Analyse the differences in identity formation between the second generation and their immigrant parents (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a; 2001b). Examine how growing up in a multicultural environment influences their identity (Pollock and van Reken 2009). Consider how gender intersects with South Asian identity, particularly for second-generation women (Crenshaw 1991). Examine how traditional gender roles and expectations shape identity.

This article examines their engagement in political and social issues, both within their host country and in relation to South Asian diaspora affairs (Modood et al. 1997). Examines their sense of belonging and civic engagement both in their host country and in their South Asian homeland. Analyse the instances of discrimination faced by second-generation South Asians and its impact on their identity (Appadurai 1996). Examine how individuals respond to discrimination and develop resilience (Umaña-Taylor and Updegraff 2007). Consider how socioeconomic status affects their identity and opportunities (Hallenbeck et al. 2016; Omi and Winant 1994). Explore how educational attainment and career choice intersect with identity (Waters and Jiménez 2005).

The places where the majority of the second-generation South Asian diaspora lives are scattered throughout the world, with significant populations in some key regions. These locations reflect the historical migration patterns, economic opportunities and settlement preferences of South Asian communities. Below I provide an overview of some of the key regions where the second-generation South Asian diaspora has established significant communities and identify relevant sources for context.

The United States is home to one of the largest and most diverse second-generation South Asian diasporic communities. Cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area have significant South Asian populations. The second-generation South Asian diaspora in the US often represents a mix of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan heritage, contributing to a rich web of identities (Chakravorty et al. 2017). The UK, particularly cities such as London, Leicester and Birmingham, is home to a significant second generation South Asian diaspora (Ballard 1994). The British South Asian community is recognised for its diversity and has contributed to shaping the cultural and political landscape (Ballard 1994).

The second-generation South Asian diaspora in Canada is primarily concentrated in cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and Brampton (Murdie and Ghosh 2010). Canada's multicultural policies have helped shape the identity and integration experiences of second-generation South Asians (Reitz 2007). Cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Perth are home to significant second-generation South Asian communities (Bedford and Spoonley 2014). These communities are often concerned with issues of multiculturalism and integration into Australian society.

The presence of second-generation South Asian diaspora communities extends beyond the traditional host countries, with notable enclaves emerging in the Gulf States, particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. These communities are closely intertwined with the economic landscape of the region, as they are often attracted by the lucrative employment opportunities offered by the emerging economies of these states (Khanna 2005). In addition, places such as Durban and Johannesburg in South Africa are home to a significant number of South Asians whose historical roots date back to the nineteenth century and contribute to the rich tapestry of the nation's multicultural fabric (Desai and Ramjetan 2008; Desai and Vahed 2007). The second-generation diaspora in South Africa represents a compelling synthesis of South Asian and African identities, reflecting the enduring legacy of historical migration and cultural exchange within the region.

It is imperative to emphasise the heterogeneity of the experiences and identities of second-generation South Asians in these different geographical contexts. Indeed, the interplay of various factors, including historical antecedents, immigration policies, socio-economic status, and cultural influences, results in significant differences in the lived realities of these communities (Patel, Phillips-Caesar, and Boutin-Foster 2012). The contextual nuances shape the course of identity formation among second-generation South Asians and lead to a spectrum of experiences that defy monolithic categorisations.

Locating the identity

The formation of the identity of the second generation in the diaspora represents a complex and profound challenge, characterised by the complicated interplay of various cultural influences. A major obstacle on this path is the inherent tension between the cultural heritage of the parents' homeland and the omnipresent influences of the host society. This clash leads to a dissonance within the individual, which manifests itself in a feeling of repression and fragmentation in the construction of identity. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco explain this phenomenon and emphasise the existential dilemma of 'being in-between,' in which the individual has to struggle with the task of reconciling the divergent cultural elements within themselves. Furthermore, this challenge is exacerbated by societal perceptions and stereotypes that impose external expectations on the second generation diaspora and hinder their search for self-discovery (Portes and Rumbaut 2001a; 2001b). Examining this complex terrain requires a dynamic process of identity negotiation in which individuals embark on a search for a harmonious synthesis that reflects the complexity of their heritage while taking into account the cultural diversity inherent in their dual identity (Orellana 2009). This journey is characterised by a continuous negotiation between competing cultural narratives and the forging of a unique identity narrative that transcends binary categorisations.

In this dynamic interplay of cultural forces, the second generation in the diaspora attempts to develop a sense of belonging and self-definition amidst the complexity of their dual cultural heritage.

The struggles of identity formation in the second generation diaspora have been a topic of great scholarly interest in recent years. A growing body of literature highlights the diverse challenges and experiences of people born or raised in countries outside of South Asia (Jones and Ferdoush 2018). The existing literature emphasises the complexity of identity formation in the context of cultural diversity, transnationalism and the interplay of various social, cultural and political factors.

A central theme pervading the scholarly discourse is the nuanced negotiation of dual or hyphenated identities within the second-generation diaspora. This intricate process unfolds amidst a backdrop of intersecting cultural, social, and personal dynamics, encapsulating the multifaceted nature of identity formation within this demographic cohort (Clifford 1994). Amidst the intricate interplay between the cultural legacies of their ancestors and the prevailing societal norms of the host country, individuals grapple with the formidable task of reconciling disparate cultural narratives to forge a cohesive sense of self. The concept of dual identity, popularised by the sociologist Milton Gordon (1964) in his book 'Assimilation in American Life,' recognises the coexistence of two cultural affiliations within one person. In addition, the term 'hyphenated identity' emphasises the use of hyphens, such as Asian-American or African-Canadian, to denote the blending of multiple cultural elements. Scholars have explored the notion of cultural hybridity and how it manifests in the diaspora, emphasising the fluid and dynamic nature of identity formation. The negotiation of these dual or hyphenated identities involves an ongoing process of self-discovery, adaptation and the creation of a unique cultural synthesis that reflects the nuanced realities of belonging to a diasporic community in a host society. Second-generation South Asians often struggle to reconcile their South Asian heritage with the cultural norms and expectations of their host countries (Ullah 2013). This process of identity negotiation can lead to feelings of ambiguity, hybridity or 'in-betweenness' (Brah 1996). Scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha (1994) have emphasised the concept of 'hybridity' to understand how individuals deal with and combine different cultural influences.

The literature emphasises the impact of racism, discrimination and stereotypes on the identity formation of second generation South Asians. The experiences of racism and microaggressions should have shaped their self-concept and created a heightened awareness of their racial and ethnic identity (Hall 1990), often leading to the development of a strong sense of ethnic pride and solidarity within the South Asian diaspora community (Yancey and Tošić 2012).

The phenomenon of globalisation is widely seen as a catalyst for the maintenance of cultural ties with South Asia among second generation people in the diaspora, leading to the emergence of what has been termed 'diasporic nationalism' (Vertovec 1999). This conceptual framework encompasses a spectrum of practises ranging from active participation in cultural festivals to consumption of South Asian media to maintaining enduring relationships with relatives in the homeland (Brubaker 2005). These diverse activities allow second-generation South Asians to build a nuanced and multi-layered identity that transcends traditional geographic boundaries, providing a sense of belonging and connection to their ancestral roots.

Furthermore, the article emphasises the complexity and richness inherent in the experiences of second-generation people in the diaspora. It sheds light on the multiple challenges of negotiating multiple cultural identities within the complex web of multicultural societies (Modood 2007). Furthermore, it foregrounds the detrimental effects of racism and discrimination on identity formation processes and highlights the ongoing struggles faced by people who move along the intersecting axes of oppression (Ho and Bennett 2010). Furthermore, the role of transnationalism emerges as an important factor in shaping the evolving contours of their sense of self, emphasising the fluidity and dynamism inherent in diasporic identity narratives.

As the South Asian diaspora continues to evolve and change, this article is of paramount importance as a valuable resource for understanding the dynamic processes underlying identity formation in an increasingly globalised and multicultural world (Werbner 2002). By describing the complex interplay of cultural, social and psychological factors, it offers invaluable insights into the lived realities of second-generation people in the diaspora, thereby enriching scholarly understanding and promoting dialogue about the multiple dimensions of identity in diasporic communities.

Discussions and conclusions

The article addresses the complicated intersections of various facets of identity, including culture, race, religion and political affiliation. These intersections serve as central points of analysis, highlighting the complex interplay between individual and collective identities within diasporic communities.

Culture plays a central role in shaping the identity landscape of second-generation South Asians abroad. As they move between the cultural norms of their ancestral homeland and the host country, they find themselves in a process of cultural negotiation and adaptation. This negotiation involves reconciling traditional customs and values with the influences of Western culture, resulting in the formation of hybrid identities that are unique (Hall 1990). In addition, maintaining cultural practises becomes a means of preserving a connection to their roots while developing a sense of belonging in their adopted homeland (Parekh 2000). Race is also an important factor in the identity formation of second-generation South Asians overseas. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they often face racial stereotypes and discrimination based on their appearance. This experience of racialisation influences the way they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, shaping their sense of identity and belonging (Dasgupta 2004). Furthermore, the intersection of race and ethnicity complicates their identity dynamics as they grapple with the complexities of their role as a racialised minority within the broader racial hierarchy of the host society (Crenshaw 1989).

Religion is another important dimension of identity for second-generation South Asians abroad, particularly those who belong to a Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or other religious community. Religious practises and beliefs not only provide a sense of spiritual grounding, but also serve as markers of cultural identity and solidarity in diasporic contexts (Vertovec 2000). However, the intersection of religion with broader socio-political discourses, including Islamophobia and religious nationalism, can complicate their identity struggles and create feelings of marginalisation and alienation (Bleich 2011). Political affiliations and ideologies intersect with the identity formation of second-generation South Asians overseas,

particularly in relation to issues such as immigration policy, transnational activism and homeland politics (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). Their engagement in political discourse and activism reflects their aspirations for social justice and equality, while also shaping their sense of belonging and agency within their diasporic communities and beyond.

Research on the struggles of identity formation among the second-generation South Asian diaspora overseas emphasises the intricate intersections of culture, race, religion and political affiliation. By examining these intersections, scholars gain insights into the nuanced experiences and challenges that individuals face in negotiating their identities in the diasporic context. Research further examines the dynamic nature of identity and recognises that it evolves over time and is influenced by both internal and external factors. This contributes to the theoretical framework of identity studies and provides insights into how identity construction is an ongoing process influenced by social, cultural and contextual factors.

The article addresses the complex and multi-layered pathway of identity formation in this dynamic group of people. Through a comprehensive analytical framework that encompasses cultural, racial, religious, generational, gender, political, linguistic, media, discriminatory and socio-economic dimensions, this research has provided valuable insights into the challenges, triumphs and evolving identities of the second generation South Asian diaspora living abroad.

One of the key findings of this research is the notion of hybrid identity construction. Second-generation South Asians often find themselves at the intersection between their cultural heritage and the dominant culture of their host country. This delicate balancing act can lead to the emergence of unique hybrid identities, where people draw on their South Asian roots while adopting aspects of their host country's culture. The concept of hybridity, as proposed by scholars such as Homi Bhabha (1994), proves helpful in understanding how individuals negotiate their cultural identities in a globalised world.

Research emphasises the importance of transnationalism in shaping the identity of the second generation South Asian diaspora. The ability to maintain strong connections to South Asia, facilitated by globalisation and technology, allows people to remain connected to their cultural heritage while navigating the challenges of integrating into their host societies (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999). This research emphasises the central role of experiences of discrimination and racism in identity formation. The struggles that second-generation South Asians face due to racism and xenophobia play an important role in the formation of their sense of self. However, these adversities often foster resilience and a commitment to social and political activism, as can be seen in the active engagement of this diaspora both in their host countries and in the South Asian diaspora (Modood et al. 1997).

The article shows the complexity of identity formation in this lively and diverse community. It emphasises the need for a nuanced understanding of their experiences and recognises the intersections of culture, race, religion and other dimensions in their lives. This study is a valuable resource for policymakers, leaders, and scholars interested in promoting inclusion and addressing the unique challenges faced by the second-generation South Asian diaspora in their quest for identity and belonging in their adopted homeland.

A major challenge for second-generation South Asians is the pressure to assimilate while preserving their heritage. The balancing act between the traditional values, customs and languages of their parents and the desire to assimilate and adopt the norms of the majority

culture can lead to a sense of cultural duality and inner conflict. This duality can manifest itself in various ways, such as changing languages, negotiating conflicting cultural expectations or feeling culturally ambiguous. The second generation may also experience discrimination and racism, both overt and subtle, due to their visible differences in appearance, name or cultural practises. These experiences can contribute to an increased search for self-identity and the need to assert their unique cultural background. Societal expectations and stereotypes can influence the formation of their identity as they are often exposed to preconceived notions about their culture, religion or socioeconomic status.

The generational gap between second-generation South Asians and their parents can exacerbate their identity issues. Differences in language skills, cultural values and generational expectations can lead to communication barriers and misunderstandings within families. These dynamics can lead to feelings of alienation from both the culture of origin and the dominant culture as second-generation individuals try to cope with conflicting familial and societal pressures. Understanding these struggles is critical to fostering a more inclusive and empathetic society that values and recognises the diverse identities of the second-generation South Asian diaspora.

The study contributes to the discourse on immigration policy by emphasising the importance of family reunification, as many second-generation South Asians maintain close family ties with their extended kin in their countries of origin. This emphasises the need for linguistic and cultural initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and linguistic traditions. The study also emphasises the need to combat cases of racial discrimination and promote social cohesion. It is a catalyst for anti-discrimination efforts and the implementation of initiatives aimed at cultivating diversity and inclusivity in host countries, thereby creating a more cohesive and equitable social environment.

This study enriches scholarly understanding by shedding light on the intricacies of identity formation processes within the second-generation South Asian diaspora. By providing policy makers and stakeholders with actionable insights, it facilitates the development of policies that are both inclusive and responsive to the specific needs and obstacles faced by this population group abroad. Furthermore, this article contributes to the existing literature by closely examining the mechanisms underlying the identity formation of second-generation South Asians, scrutinising aspects such as cultural, racial, religious, gender and generational dimensions. Using a multidisciplinary approach and drawing on established theoretical frameworks from disciplines such as diaspora studies, sociology and cultural studies, this research promotes a nuanced understanding of the myriad challenges and opportunities faced by second-generation South Asians in diasporic contexts.

Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

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