

**Silenced by the Surname?: South Asian Parents' Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse**

**Disclosure and Recantation**

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Science in Forensic Psychology**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology (Ontario Tech University)  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

August, 2023

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## **THESIS EXAMINATION INFORMATION**

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**Master of Science in Forensic Psychology**

Thesis title: Silenced by the Surname?: South Asian Parents' Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse Disclosure and Recantation
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## **ABSTRACT**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious public health concern affecting millions. Identifying such abuse typically requires disclosure from victims—a challenging task considering potential social, familial, and ethnic barriers surrounding disclosure. Since honour, modesty, and shame are pervasive within South Asian communities, familial reputation may trump CSA transgressions. Moreover, given the taboos around sexual matters in the South Asian community, children may face difficulties disclosing their sexual abuse experiences. Using a cross-national survey and hypothetical vignettes, we investigated South Asian and White parents' perceptions of CSA disclosures and recantations and examined how these relate to the CSA victim's relationship with the perpetrator. Findings indicate that regardless of ethnic group or perpetrator relationship, parents tended to react with high levels of support following the story child's disclosure. However, there were differences by ethnic group and perpetrator type following recantation, highlighting the importance of educating parents around various disclosure patterns like recantation.

*Keywords:* child sexual abuse; disclosure; recantation; parents; South Asian; perception

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## **STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS**

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. My supervisor assisted in materials creation and provided feedback and ideas for improvement. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Lindsay Malloy, for all her support and supervision throughout my master's degree, particularly in supporting me to realize my strengths as a researcher. Without her expertise and involvement, this thesis would be incomplete. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work alongside you in exploring the very difficult but important topic of child sexual abuse disclosure and its ethnic components. I would also like to give a special thank you to Dr. Tanya Karam-Zanders for believing in this project and the importance of ethnic research. And of course, I thank my graduate peers, especially Chelsea B., Mari P., and Cassandre D., for their companionship, kindness, and advice—keep being amazing people!

I am also grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) sponsors for their financial support.

I extend a very important thanks to my best friend, Yekta Sharafaddin-Zadeh, for guiding me through my stressful moments and helping me realize my abilities not only as a researcher and academic but as an individual. You are a brilliant woman and I am forever thankful for your friendship.

Last, but never least, I thank my family, including my parents and grandparents, for making the ultimate sacrifice and moving from their homeland in Punjab to give my brother and me a better future. You are my drive and all that I do is for you. Thank you for your love.

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## **Silenced by the Surname?: South Asian Parents' Perceptions of Child Sexual Abuse**

### **Disclosure and Recantation**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious public health concern affecting millions of children globally (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). Because CSA often occurs in private and physical evidence may be limited, identifying CSA typically requires a report from victims themselves; however, few disclose immediately, and still, others recant (i.e., take back) their disclosures after making them (London et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007). As such, many studies have focused on identifying factors that affect victims' disclosure tendencies and report maintenance following disclosure (e.g., parents' reactions to disclosures).

Although cultural context can affect children's reactions to and understanding of trauma, interventions following abuse, and community responses to abuse (e.g., Bottoms & Goodman, 1996; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006; Vargas & Koss-Chioino, 1992), the potential role of culture (including race/ethnicity) on CSA disclosures has been studied relatively rarely (see Malloy et al., 2020, for a review). Due in part to under-reporting and recantations of CSA among South Asian children in particular (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006), the proposed research aims to investigate South Asian parents' perceptions of CSA disclosure and recantation in order to advance our understanding of how disclosure operates within this group and factors that influence children's disclosure patterns more generally.

South Asian individuals are those descending from countries including India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives. As individuals who identify with an ethnic group typically identify with a shared culture involving collective social values, traditions, and beliefs (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002), group members often uphold cultural and ethnic practices to maintain their membership. Since *izzat* (honour and respect),

*haya* (modesty), and *sharam* (shame/embarrassment) are pervasive in South Asian communities, familial reputation may interact negatively with CSA disclosure and lead to instances of nondisclosure, delayed disclosure, or recantation.

Given the taboos around sexual matters for South Asian people, South Asian children in particular may face difficulties disclosing their sexual abuse experiences, especially when warned not to tell or when led to believe there will be punishments for telling. Yet, a survey in India reported the prevalence of CSA as 53% for youth, with boys and girls being equally affected (Subramaniyan et al., 2017). Values typical of South Asian families may not only influence South Asian children's disclosure patterns but also how this disclosure is received by South Asian parents. The contrast between South Asian children's potential lack of openness toward CSA disclosure and the prevalence of CSA among this population highlights the importance of studying parents' reactions to children's disclosure of CSA, a variable that has been shown to affect children's adjustment following CSA and report maintenance (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Lawson & Chaffin, 1992; Lovett, 2004; Malloy et al., 2007). Moreover, the overall lack of research investigating the potential impact of ethnicity on CSA disclosure makes this endeavour all the more relevant (Malloy et al., 2020).

### **Child Sexual Abuse Disclosure and Recantation**

While the definition of CSA may differ somewhat by race, ethnicity, and/or culture (Malloy et al., 2020), according to the World Health Organization (2003), CSA is defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to or in which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. This can include but is not limited to, intercourse, child prostitution, inviting a child to touch sexually, exhibitionism, child

pornography and online child luring by cyber-predators. Within Canada alone, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2019) reported over 8,000 sexual violations against children in 2017.

Identifying instances of CSA is made difficult due to the typically private nature of such incidents, limited physical evidence, and importantly, the many psychological barriers to disclosure (London et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007). Children who do not disclose immediately have been found to experience greater major depressive episodes and delinquency (Broman-Fulks et al., 2007). Not only can timely disclosure buffer the negative impacts of abuse, but it can also reduce the likelihood of further abuse (Kogan, 2005). Within the legal realm, delayed disclosure, incomplete details in accounts, and recantation have been found to influence the believability of children's CSA claims and the outcome of legal proceedings (Campbell et al., 2016; Goodman et al., 1992; Lamb et al., 1994; London et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007; Pipe et al., 2013). While non-disclosure is often the first obstacle to uncovering CSA, recantation and inconsistencies may occur and present challenges for intervening in and prosecuting cases of CSA (Lyon, 2007). Recantations have been shown to lower the credibility of child victims' disclosures (Morison & Greene, 1992). This is noteworthy given that some research suggests that recantation is not uncommon. For example, Malloy et al. (2007) found a 23.1% recantation rate among 257 substantiated cases of sexual abuse filed in dependency court in California.

There are several reasons why a child victim of sexual abuse may not disclose their experience or later recant the allegation(s). One reason may be that the child is concerned or fearful about the reactions others may have to their account (Anderson et al., 1993; Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Malloy et al., 2011). According to retrospective analyses of CSA disclosure by adults, fear of family rejection and disbelief upon disclosure were cited as major

contributors to non-disclosure (Palmer et al., 1999; Somer & Szwarcberg, 2001). Children might also wonder if their parents will punish them if they disclose the CSA (Anderson et al., 1993; Palmer et al., 1999; Summit, 1983). Alternatively, a child might worry—perhaps as a result of threats and manipulation by the perpetrator—that their disclosing the CSA will cause their family to worry and create strain at home, thus escalating the issue and possibly involving the perpetrator to pursue retributions (Beniuk & Rimer, 2006; Malloy et al., 2011; Smith & Cook, 2008; Summit, 1983). The child may also be afraid of rejection by family, friends, and sometimes even by the offender (Palmer et al., 1999; Somer & Szwarcberg, 2001). Child victims may also fear that people, especially those close to them, will treat them differently if they know about the abuse. Previous work by Malloy and colleagues (2014) used vignettes to study how children perceived parents would react to disclosures of adult wrongdoing and included (but did not thoroughly analyze) perceptions of anger toward the disclosing child. The current study can act as an improvement to this by directly asking parents whether they would react with anger toward the story child vs the alleged perpetrator. With regards to more formal interventions, Smith and Cook (2008) reported that fear of parental sanctions, or fear that parents would report the incident to the police were common reasons for non-disclosure. In fact, a study from Statistics Canada found that 68% of men and 64% of women did not report their CSA experiences to the police or have another individual report the abuse (Northcott, 2013). Reporting instances of CSA may be an important step to ensuring the safety of the child and the appropriate retributive actions against the perpetrator; however, following previous research findings, the most commonly reported reasons for not reporting to the police were influenced by the fearful reactions anticipated by child victims, including feeling afraid of not being believed,

feeling ashamed or embarrassed, not receiving family support, and/or not knowing they could report the abuse (Northcott, 2013).

The current study focuses on parents' reactions to disclosure, including parents' likelihood of being angry toward the child vs the perpetrator, punishing the child, calling the police, and believing the child. Some children may be cognizant of the negative emotions surrounding disclosure, particularly shame or embarrassment. They may attribute the blame to themselves and believe that they deserved the abuse (Quas et al., 2003). This may be linked to ethnic group values which will be discussed later and conceptualized in the current study as parents' worry about their family's honour. Moreover, in studying disclosure patterns, many studies have focused on identifying factors that affect victims' disclosure tendencies. The present research focuses specifically on the influence of parents' reactions to disclosure and recantation in South Asian families including in relation to the child's relationship to the perpetrator. Research concerning CSA disclosure and recantation and how the perpetrator identity and ethnic group membership may impact such patterns is described next.

### **Recipient Reactions to Disclosure and Recantation**

There are several reasons why it is important to examine parents' reactions to children's CSA disclosures specifically. One is that many children disclose their CSA experiences to their parents and especially to their mothers (Malloy et al., 2013; Sauzier, 1989; Schaeffer et al., 2011). While some research suggests that peers are the most common confidants of CSA for older youth (Crisma et al., 2004; Priebe & Svedin, 2008), a systematic review by Manay and Collin-Vézina (2021) examining the recipients of CSA disclosure found that younger children typically disclosed to their parents, while older child victims tended to share with their peers first. A second reason that it is critical to examine parents' reactions to children's CSA

disclosures is that research indicates that parental (and especially maternal) support following disclosure can aid a child's adjustment post-abuse and counteract some of the harmful effects of the abuse (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Lovett, 2004), whereas parents' negative reactions to disclosure or the reactions that children anticipate from parents can influence nondisclosure and recantation (e.g., Lawson & Chaffin, 1992; Malloy et al., 2007).

Lawson and Chaffin (1992) found that children with physical evidence of CSA whose caretakers were willing to accept the possibility that their child may have been sexually abused disclosed 63% of the time as compared to 17% for children whose caretakers denied any possibility of abuse. Elliott and Briere (1994) found a similar negative association between maternal support and recantation rates. In Malloy et al.'s (2007) aforementioned study, a key factor that predicted whether children recanted was the unsupportiveness of non-offending caregivers (typically mothers) to their children's disclosures.

Research demonstrates that children's fear of adult reactions to disclosure are well founded, at least some of the time. For example, Malloy and colleagues (2007) found that mothers reacted in an unsupportive manner (including initial disbelief or skepticism to the allegation, blaming the child, pressuring the child to recant, and/or continuing romantic or interpersonal involvement with the perpetrator after the allegation) to CSA accounts in nearly 60% of cases that had been filed in dependency court. Moreover, Elliott and Carnes (2001) note that while the majority of mothers are supportive of their child following a CSA allegation, there is still a substantial number who are not. The researchers also indicate that maternal belief did not necessitate supportive or protective responses; however, mothers who were ambivalent to their child's disclosure were still sometimes able to take protective actions. Hershkowitz and colleagues (2007) found a strong correlation between predicted and actual parental reactions to

CSA disclosure, suggesting that children are often very good at anticipating their parents' reactions. While disclosing sexual abuse can be a difficult and traumatic experience, it is even more strenuous to navigate for children who—without support from key individuals in their lives—can feel inclined to recant in order to distance themselves from the resulting fear, guilt, self-blame, and confusion stemming from disclosure. Children may face difficulties coping with the anxiety and disruption caused by the disclosure, and recantation provides a means to “make the whole thing go away” and re-establish a pre-disclosure state of relative peace and harmony (Maddock, 1988; Rieser, 1991; Sorensen & Snow, 1991).

Rieser (1991) notes a lack of support from family and friends and/or direct pressure or threats to take back their admissions from these close figures or the offender as perhaps the strongest factor in leading CSA victims to recant. Other studies have linked negative expectations of disclosure with non-disclosure or delayed disclosure (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Malloy et al., 2011). Given that predicted negative reactions can deter children from opening up about their experiences of abuse and actual negative reactions are associated with recantation, understanding parents' perceptions of CSA disclosure is paramount. However, to date, studies of adults' perceptions of and reactions to children's CSA disclosures and recantations have focused on the perceptions of jury-eligible adults who are not necessarily parents (Denne et al., 2021; Dykstra et al., 2021). Also, these studies have largely focused on adults' perceptions of children's testimony (e.g., transcripts or videos) rather than their initial disclosures or recantations. Furthermore, these studies have neglected to focus on other potentially important factors such as the ethnic group to which the participant belongs. This study uniquely investigates how parents specifically react to disclosure and recantation allegations as presented using a hypothetical vignette, placing South Asian and White parents in



the situation while systematically varying another important variable—the child’s relationship to the perpetrator.

### **Child’s Relationship to the Perpetrator**

Research demonstrates that the child’s relationship to the perpetrator has implications for children’s disclosure patterns. Extrafamilial CSA is associated with increased disclosure; children who are abused by a family member are less likely to disclose and more likely to delay disclosure than children abused by someone outside the family (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Kogan, 2004; Lyon et al., 2010; Schönbucher et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2000). Moreover, Distel (1999) found that disclosures were often delayed and reported to persons outside the family as opposed to disclosed to family members when victims were closely related to the offender. Meanwhile, Elliott and colleagues (2022) studied reactions to intrafamilial CSA disclosure through a National Sexual Assault Online Hotline and found that the majority of children disclosed their intrafamilial abuse to another family member, predominantly to a non-offending parent. Interestingly, over 75% of these disclosures resulted in a negative reaction, with most of these negative reactions involving the child being dismissed or not believed. They found that compared to non-familial formal and informal supports, family members were more likely to react negatively.

Child sexual abuse victims are also more likely to recant or have inconsistencies in their stories when abuse is perpetrated by a familiar person, especially family like a parent figure (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Lyon & Ahern, 2011; Malloy et al., 2007). Children who are abused by a trusted individual may be especially likely to not fully understand what occurred to them, leaving feelings of anger, betrayal, or deep sadness (Beniuk & Rimer, 2006). This confusion may

also create issues with loyalty as the child may wonder whether they should speak up or stay loyal to the perpetrator. Pressures to keep the abuse a secret or recant may thus be motivated by an emotional dependency on the perpetrator—or perhaps a financial dependency (Rieser, 1991).

Laboratory studies examining children’s perceptions of the disclosure of adult wrongdoing demonstrate that perceptions vary as a function of perpetrator (i.e., “instigator”) identity. Lyon and colleagues (2010) used vignettes to ask children whether a child character would or should disclose an adult’s wrongdoing. They found that children as young as four years predicted that the child character would disclose less against parent instigators as opposed to stranger instigators. Another laboratory study found that children were less likely to disclose parents’ transgressions compared to transgression of other adults (Tye et al., 1999). Malloy and colleagues (2014) found similar findings of less disclosure against parent instigators and explained that as children age, values of family loyalty and secrecy become more salient, thus deterring disclosure of wrongdoing perpetrated by parents. Moreover, the researchers found that older children also understand that their disclosure against a parent is likely to be met with skepticism and the wrongdoing is less likely to be reported to the authorities. Research by Ullman (2007) supports this conclusion and further states that children face more negative reactions (e.g., disbelief, lack of support) when their abuser is a relative rather than a stranger. Ullman (2007) states that betrayal abuse (i.e., abuse by a relative) led to longer delays in disclosure as participants expected more negative reactions; in turn, these negative social reactions led to a greater presentation of psychological symptoms such as PTSD. These findings demonstrate children’s understanding of the social barriers to and consequences of disclosure against parental transgressions. Again, these worries may be well-founded as research by Roesler and Wind (1994) of adult women who experienced CSA by relatives showed that only 37%

recalled supportive reactions from their parents while 63% reported non-supportive reactions such as disbelief and rejection. In the present study, we examined parents' perceptions, including parents' belief in the child's disclosure, their likelihood of being angry at the child, as well as their likelihood of contacting formal authorities.

Considering the impact that a related perpetrator can have on disclosure patterns and a child's adjustment post-abuse, it is critical to evaluate the effects of the relationship to the perpetrator when investigating parents' perceptions of CSA disclosure. It is also critical to investigate these perceptions among South Asian parents. A perpetrator's relation to a child may especially impede disclosure for children in South Asian communities that promote group cohesion, harmony, and honour—all of which may easily be compromised by the conflict that could arise from a CSA allegation.

### **South Asian Ethnicity and CSA Disclosure**

Ethnic group membership involves individuals who identify with the commonalities of a culture which can be defined as a well-established set of shared social values, traditions, and beliefs influenced by several internal and external socio-political factors (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Shweder & LeVine, 1984). Not only can these shared values be integral to shaping one's identity, they also influence both the development and adjustment of children following adversity (Theron et al., 2015; Ungar, 2013). Similarly, religion has been found to constitute, influence, and transcend ethnicity and culture, and its unique interaction is thus an important inclusion within research focused on ethnicity (Saroglou & Cohen, 2011). Therefore, including ethnic and religious context in research involving CSA can provide a more rich and diverse understanding

of different disclosure patterns, including any barriers that child victims may face related to their ethnicity.

Fontes and Plummer (2010) note how specific values potentially related to one's ethnicity such as shame, taboos and modesty, sexual scripts, virginity, religious values, honour, respect, and patriarchy (among others) contribute to difficulties in disclosing CSA. Many of these values are endorsed by South Asian communities. As a collectivistic society, South Asian groups often follow principles of harmony and community which also introduces ideals such as *izzat* (honour and respect), *haya* (modesty), and *sharam* (shame and embarrassment) (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006). For instance, according to Segal (1996), the Indian family structure can be characterized with the following values: (1) the individual is expected to make sacrifices for the good of the family, consistent with an allocentric or group-oriented mindset, (2) young girls are often groomed to contribute to the wellbeing of their husband's family, (3) children are obedient and their role is to bring honour to their families through high achievements and good behaviour, (4) the family has a great degree of dependency wherein children are emotionally and socially dependent on their parents, (5) obligation and shame permeate significant relationships; one is to be selfless and obligated to significant others and one should never bring shame onto the family. Because these values tend to be endorsed by South Asian communities, sexual topics—including masturbation, sex, and even menstruation—are often taboo (Gill & Harrison, 2019; Takhar, 2016). Similarly, the patriarchal organization within many South Asian families can perpetuate traditional gender beliefs that may interact with CSA disclosure patterns. For instance, Alaggia (2010) found that CSA disclosure was negatively influenced by fixed gender roles with dominating fathers such that young girls were inhibited from disclosing as a result of induced fear of the repercussions of disclosing and a sense of personal responsibility and self-blame for

the victimization. Moreover, the study found that both men and women reported being raised with the attitude that children “do not count” and their testimonies should not be taken seriously. With regards to taking formal action against CSA, Gill and Harrison (2019) found that British South Asian communities held a widespread belief that the police did not understand their values and traditions nor do they cater to the context-specific needs of victims from their communities. Considering the patriarchal structure within many traditional South Asian communities, another concern revolved around the fact that many police officers were men and likely to side with the men in the community instead of the victim (Gill & Harrison, 2019).

Nonetheless, these traditional gender norms are normalized in South Asian communities to the point where practicing these values becomes indicative of one's familial reputation. Familial honour and status can often curtail the discovery of and supportive reactions toward CSA, likely contributing to the under-reporting and recantations of CSA among South Asians (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006). When in conflict with familial adults, children may be hushed and reminded of the consequential shame to their family name as a result of a CSA disclosure. In fact, a previous study found that South Asian parents believed that community members would not believe their children's CSA disclosure and may blame both the victim and the parents for allowing the abuse to occur (Rodger et al. 2020). These deeply-entrenched familial bonds can make CSA disclosure particularly difficult and recantation more likely when the perpetrator is a family member, especially among South Asian children.

### **The Present Study**

Although ethnicity can affect children's reactions to and understanding of trauma, interventions following abuse, and community responses to abuse (e.g., Bottoms & Goodman, 1996; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006; Vargas & Koss-Chioino, 1992), the potential role of ethnicity on

CSA disclosures has rarely been studied, particularly within the South Asian community. The proposed research investigated South Asian parents' perceptions of CSA disclosure and recantation by presenting parents with a vignette concerning both CSA disclosure and recantation after which parents answered a set of questions indicating their affective and behavioral responses to the vignette. Moreover, parents' levels of acculturation, religiosity, and gender ideologies were assessed in order to gauge whether these individual differences influenced their perceptions and reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation.

Considering the relevant literature, we formed several key hypotheses regarding the items concerning the story child's disclosure of abuse. First, we predicted that parents would be generally supportive of the story child's abuse disclosure, reporting, for example, high levels of anger toward the perpetrator, little anger toward the story child, and low likelihood of punishing the story child. Second, we expected several differences between South Asian and White parents to emerge when the story child disclosed abuse. Specifically, we predicted that South Asian parents would report greater concern for familial honour than White parents. We also expected South Asian parents to be less likely to report taking retributive actions against the perpetrator compared to their White counterparts considering the heavy value of maintaining familial bonds and harmony within the South Asian community. That is, we expected South Asian parents to be less likely to call the police following the story child's disclosure. We also expected South Asian parents to report lower levels of anger toward the perpetrator than White parents. Third, with respect to the child's relationship to the perpetrator, we hypothesized that parents would show more support of the story child and belief in the story child's disclosure (i.e., higher anger toward the perpetrator, lower anger toward the child, lower likelihood of punishing the child, greater likelihood of calling the police) when the perpetrator was a stranger as opposed to a known,

family friend. Again considering the high value placed on family and community bonds, we predicted that perpetrator type differences would be especially evident for the South Asian parents compared to the White parents..

Regarding the items concerning the story child's recantation of abuse, we made no a priori predictions concerning potential ethnic group or perpetrator type differences. Although considerable research has focused on parents' reactions to children's abuse disclosures, there is no comparable body of literature concerning parents' (or other adults') reactions to abuse recantation. The present study explored such reactions among both South Asian and White parents while systematically varying the child's relationship to the perpetrator.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

We recruited 353 participants across Canada using the online recruitment firm, CloudResearch, with special instructions that approximately half the sample identify as South Asian. To be eligible, participants had to be parents—biological, adoptive, legal, or step—of children currently aged 4-17. Individuals of South Asian descent were any individuals who have either immigrated to or were born in Canada with roots from at least one of the following countries: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, or the Maldives.

A total of 330 respondents completed the survey battery. The sample used to test the current hypotheses ( $n = 232$ ) included parents who reported their ethnicity as South Asian or White. Thus, we excluded a total of 81 participants who did not identify as South Asian or White and 17 who did not report their ethnicity. The final sample comprised 137 South Asian parents

(42.8% of the total sample) and 95 White parents (29.7% of the total sample). We also excluded individuals who failed both of the attention checks ( $n = 23$ ).

Regarding the South Asian parents, their average age was 30.92 years, with 49 (35.8%) men and 88 (64.2%) women. Thirty-six (27.1%) respondents reported being born in Canada while 97 (71.9%) reported being born outside of Canada (4 did not respond and were considered missing). Moreover, 116 (84.7%) reported living with their partner/spouse while 19 (13.9%) did not ( $n = 2$  missing). Approximately half (48.2%) of South Asian parents reported having one child, while 49 (35.8%) reported having two children, 19 (13.9%) had three children, and one (.7%) participant had four children. The average age of the children in this group was 9.95 years.

Among White parents, the average age of the participants was 41.86 years, with 39 (41.5%) men and 55 (58.5%) women. Eighty-five (90.4%) were born in Canada while 9 (9.6%) were born outside of Canada. Seventy-eight (83.0%) of respondents reported living with their partner/spouse while 16 (17.0%) did not. Similar to the South Asian sample, approximately half (52.1%) of White parents reported having one child, while 29 (30.9%) reported having two children, 13 (13.8%) said they had three children, one (1.1%) respondent reported having four children, and two (2.1%) parents reported having five children. The average age across the children in this group was 11.58 years.

## **Procedure**

Participants completed the study individually and entirely online in their preferred setting. Participants first responded to a screening question to check their eligibility to participate, followed by the consent form. After participants provided informed consent, the various measures were administered in a fixed order (see Materials section). Participants were asked demographic questions which included questions about their own and their partner's



gender, age, ethnic identity, religiosity, among others. Then, they were presented with a vignette concerning a child disclosing and recanting an experience of sexual abuse alongside corresponding questions about their affective and behavioral responses to the disclosure and recantation. Lastly, participants responded to questionnaires concerning acculturation and gender ideology. Moreover, we included attention checks (e.g., “Select ‘Disagree’ for this item.”) as well as repeating a personal question to ensure response integrity (i.e., asking participants to enter the age of their oldest child both at the beginning and middle of the survey to see if their responses matched). The study took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. Participants were compensated with \$6.50 for every half an hour of participation.

## **Materials**

**Demographic questions.** Participants completed demographic items concerning their gender, sex, age, country of birth, religiosity, relationship status, education, income level, as well as the number, age, and gender of their children, among other items (See Appendix A). We also collected similar demographic information about their partner.

**Vignettes.** All participants read a vignette with a child first disclosing an instance of sexual abuse and then recanting this claim, with participants in one condition reading a scenario with a known alleged perpetrator (a family friend) and participants in the other condition reading a scenario with an alleged perpetrator who was a stranger (child’s school friend’s neighbour).

In order to obtain the greatest generalizability while reducing the number of manipulated factors, the vignette included a young girl as the victim and an adult man as the alleged perpetrator (Banyard et al., 2004; Buhrmester & Prager, 1995; Gordon, 1990; Hébert, et al., 2009; Hornor, 2010; Lippert, et al., 2009; Snyder, 2000). Aforementioned research suggests that girls disclose more than boys and that men are the principal offenders of CSA; moreover, since

South Asian women face exceedingly greater expectations of chastity and purity (Bhopal, 2019; Dasgupta, 2007; Mahalingam, 2007; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000), this combination of victim and alleged perpetrator is most representative for the given ethnic group parameters.

To optimize experimental control, it was also important to consider the child's age within the vignette. Not controlling for age may create unsystematic variance in responses (e.g., if all parents were imagining their own child). Based on the typical inverted U-shaped pattern regarding rates of CSA disclosure (London et al., 2005), the vignette in the present research described a 7-year-old child. The vignette was presented one at a time such that participants read the disclosure scenario and answered questions regarding their reactions to the child disclosing the abuse, followed by the recantation portion of the vignette and the same set of questions regarding their reactions, this time about the recantation. Parents were randomly assigned to either the stranger perpetrator vignette or the family friend perpetrator vignette, each with both the disclosure and recantation portions. See Appendix B for both vignettes and the related response items.

**Acculturation and Gender Ideology.** We also administered scales to measure parents' level of acculturation and their gender ideologies for use in exploratory analyses. We included the 20-item Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA), a bi-dimensional scale that assesses immigrants' orientations toward heritage and mainstream cultures (Ryder et al., 2000). The VIA produced a Cronbach alpha score of .75 mainstream subscale, which corresponded closely to the values reported by Ryder and colleagues (2000) in their construction and psychometric testing of the scale. Higher mean scores on both subscales indicate strong identification with both heritage and mainstream cultures. See Appendix C for a full list of the items.

We used select items from the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS), the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS), and a chastity scale to measure participants' gender ideology (see bolded items in Appendix C). Items were selected based on strong face validity and prior short-versions of the scales (Levant et al., 2016; Levant et al., 2017). The MRNS, created by Thompson and Pleck (1986), measures participant's agreement with standards that perpetuate men's feelings of "power and privilege" and includes three subsections: status norms (11 items), toughness norms (8 items), and anti-femininity norms (7 items). The Cronbach's alpha for the MRNS scale was .82, which closely matched the values reported by Thompson and Pleck (1995). The convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity of the MRNS has been tested in numerous studies, and Thompson and Pleck (1995) report that the scale reveals strong construct and discriminant validity. The FIS captures perceptions about "body image, care-taking, sexuality, family, religion, marriage, passivity, dependency and career" (Levant et al., 2007). There are five subsections in the FIS: stereotypic image and activities (4 items), dependency (7 items), purity (7 items), caretaking (6 items), and emotionality (8 items). The Cronbach's alpha for the FIS scale was .93, which matched the value reported by Levant and colleagues (2007). Levant and colleagues (2007) also found the FIS to be a valid and reliable measure of traditional femininity ideologies. We also included select items from the 23-item chastity scale that assessed participants' attitudes and beliefs about idealized perceptions of chaste women, including attitudes about the purity, righteousness, and strength of chaste women (Mahalingam, 2007). Through psychometric testing, the chastity scale produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89, closely matching the values reported by Mahalingam (2007).

### **Data Reduction and Coding**

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis to potentially reduce the 13 dependent

variables into conceptually-related factors. However, as the items did not load consistently onto related factors, we evaluated the individual items most relevant to our hypotheses. This included parents' level of anger toward the alleged perpetrator, anger toward the story child, worry about familial honour, likelihood of punishing the child, likelihood of calling the police, and likelihood of believing the child's disclosure and recantation. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a greater emotional response (i.e., worry, anger) and a greater likelihood of taking a course of action (e.g., call police, punish child, believe child).

Due to small numbers in some of the cells, we collapsed education level into two groups (1 = participants who reported having no degree, a high school degree, or some post-secondary; 2 = participants who reported having a university degree or graduate/professional degree).

## **Results**

### ***Preliminary Analyses***

We first examined whether our sample of South Asian and White parents differed on various demographic variables such as income, gender, age, and education. Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences between the ethnic groups on income ( $p = .316$ ) or gender ( $p = .410$ ). However, a t-test revealed significant differences between the groups on age ( $p = .039$ ) and a chi-square analysis showed significant differences for education level ( $p < .001$ ). With regards to age, South Asian parents tended to be younger on average ( $M = 30.92$  years,  $SD = 13.45$  years) than their White counterparts ( $M = 41.86$  years,  $SD = 7.26$  years). The South Asian parents also tended to report higher levels of education earned, with 114 South Asian parents holding university degrees or higher compared to 44 White parents. Compared to the 50 White parents who reported an education level of less than a university degree, 23 South Asians

reported the same. Thus, we included age and education level as covariates in our primary analyses.

### ***Primary Analyses***

The primary analyses consisted of 2 (South Asian vs White) X 2 (stranger vs known perpetrator) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) on the six dependent variables concerning responses following the story child's disclosure and recantation separately (i.e., anger toward the child, anger toward the alleged perpetrator, punishing the child, calling the police, worrying about the family's honour, and believing the child's statements), including age and education level as covariates in all of these analyses. This allowed us to examine the effects of ethnic group and perpetrator type on reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation. These six potential responses were selected as they were most relevant to our hypotheses wherein we proposed that while White and South Asian parents would generally respond in a supportive manner to the child's disclosure, the latter may report greater concerns for familial honour, report less anger towards the perpetrator and indicate less retributive actions toward the perpetrator (e.g., calling the police). Support for the child can be indicated with greater anger toward the alleged perpetrator, less anger toward the story child, and less likelihood of punishing the story child. Moreover, we hypothesized that parents would respond with greater support for the story child when the alleged perpetrator was a stranger as opposed to someone they know, with South Asian parents showing a stronger effect as a result of the greater value placed on family and community bonds for this ethnic group.

### **Parent Responses to the Story Child's CSA Disclosure**

The first set of analyses examined parents' reactions to the story child's sexual abuse disclosure. In six 2 (ethnic group: South Asian v. White) X 2 (perpetrator type: stranger or

family friend) between subject ANOVAs, we analyzed whether there were significant differences between how South Asian and White parents responded to the story child's disclosure and whether participants in the known perpetrator condition would respond differently than those in the stranger perpetrator condition. We also examined potential ethnic group X perpetrator-type interactions on the dependent variables as well as any effects of the covariates, age and education level. The effects of covariates are noted when they are significant at a  $p < .05$  level; for all other covariate information, see Table 4. Results are described for each of the six DVs (anger toward the alleged perpetrator, anger toward the child, worry about familial honour, punishing the child, calling the police, and believing the child).

**Anger toward the alleged perpetrator.** Results revealed no significant main effect of ethnic group or perpetrator type. That is, parents' anger toward the alleged perpetrator was not significantly different for the South Asian parents ( $M = 6.73, SD = .66$ ) than for the White parents ( $M = 6.65, SD = .77$ ),  $F(1, 227) = .70, p = .405$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . Furthermore, parents' anger toward the stranger following the story child's disclosure ( $M = 6.66, SD = .68$ ) did not significantly differ from parents' anger toward the family friend ( $M = 6.72, SD = .73$ ),  $F(1, 227) = .44, p = .508$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . However, there was a significant ethnic group X perpetrator type interaction for parents' anger toward the alleged perpetrator,  $F(1, 227) = 4.04, p = .046$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .017$ . South Asian parents were significantly more likely to express anger toward the perpetrator in the stranger condition ( $M = 6.79, SD = .48$ ) than White parents ( $M = 6.53, SD = .91$ ). However, South Asian ( $M = 6.67, SD = .80$ ) and White ( $M = 6.78, SD = .63$ ) parents did not significantly differ in their anger toward the family friend. It is important to note that the effect size for the interaction was small. As shown in Figure 1.0, the pattern follows a cross-over interaction. There were no significant effects of parent age ( $p = .594$ ); however, there was a

significant effect of the parent education level covariate ( $p = .026$ ) on parents' reported anger toward the alleged perpetrator following disclosure of the abuse (see Table 4).

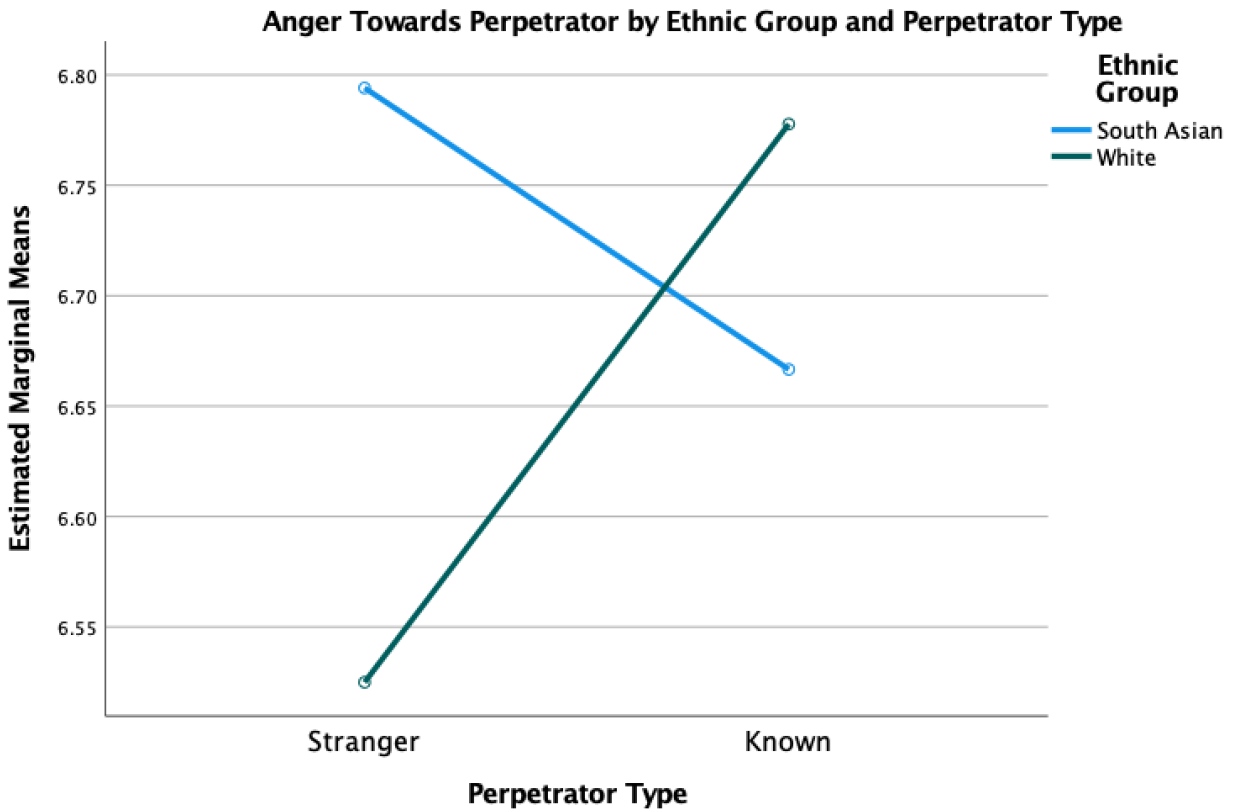


Figure 1. Mean anger toward perpetrator by ethnic group and perpetrator type. The cross-over indicates that compared to White parents, South Asian parents were only significantly more angry toward the perpetrator when he was a stranger; however, this difference was not significant when the perpetrator was a family friend.

**Anger toward the child.** When it came to parents' responses of anger toward the story child, no significant main effects or interactions emerged. Regarding ethnic group, parents' anger toward the child was similar among South Asian parents ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 2.27$ ) as among White parents ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ),  $F(1, 227) = 1.61$ ,  $p = .206$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . Similarly, parents' anger toward the child did not significantly differ when they read about the stranger ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) as the alleged perpetrator or the family friend as the alleged perpetrator ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) as the alleged perpetrator or the family friend as the alleged perpetrator ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ).

= 2.03),  $F(1, 227) = .90, p = .343$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . Finally, the ethnic group and perpetrator type variables did not interact significantly,  $F(1, 227) = 1.91, p = .169$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$ .

**Worry about familial honour.** Surprisingly, there was not a significant main effect of ethnic group concerning parents' reacting to disclosure with worry about familial honour,  $F(1, 227) = 3.53, p = .061$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .015$ . South Asian parents reported similar amounts of worry about familial honour ( $M = 3.93, SD = 2.41$ ) following the story child's disclosure as their White counterparts ( $M = 4.53, SD = 2.36$ ). There was also no significant main effect of perpetrator type, with parents' reported worry about their familial honour being no significantly different when the perpetrator was a stranger ( $M = 4.05, SD = 2.40$ ) as opposed to a family friend ( $M = 4.41, SD = 2.40$ ),  $F(1, 227) = 1.22, p = .271$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . Furthermore, there was no significant interaction effect between ethnic group and perpetrator type for familial honour,  $F(1, 227) = .42, p = .518$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ .

**Punishing the child.** Parents responded with how likely they would react by punishing the story child following disclosure. Here, no significant main effects of ethnic group,  $F(1, 227) = .53, p = .469$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ , or perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = .02, p = .894$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , emerged, nor did the two variables interact significantly,  $F(1, 227) = 2.07, p = .151$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . As expected, parents' reported likelihood of punishing the child following disclosure was generally low and not significantly different for the South Asian parents ( $M = 1.77, SD = 1.62$ ) than for the White parents ( $M = 1.616, SD = 1.370$ ). Furthermore, parents reported being similarly likely to punish the story child regardless of whether they were asked about an alleged stranger perpetrator ( $M = 1.68, SD = 1.48$ ) versus a family friend perpetrator ( $M = 1.70, SD = 1.56$ ).



**Calling the police.** Regarding parents' reported likelihood of calling the police following the story child's disclosure, no significant main effect of ethnic group emerged,  $F(1, 227) = 2.56$ ,  $p = .111$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .011$ , as South Asian parents ( $M = 6.07$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) were similarly likely as White parents ( $M = 6.35$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) to claim that they would call the police following disclosure. However, there was a significant main effect of perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = 4.75$ ,  $p = .030$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .020$ , with parents' reported likelihood of calling the police being significantly higher when the child alleged abuse against the stranger ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) than the family friend ( $M = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ). Note that this finding had a small effect size, and the means suggest that both groups of parents responded that they would be "somewhat likely" to call the police after the child disclosed the abuse. There was no significant ethnic group X perpetrator type interaction,  $F(1, 227) = .55$ ,  $p = .461$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . Finally, there was a significant effect of the parent age covariate ( $p = .008$ ) on parents' likelihood of calling the police following CSA disclosure, but no significant effect of parent education level ( $p = .131$ ) (see Table 4).

**Believing the child.** Regarding parent belief of the story child's disclosure, there were no significant main effects of ethnic group,  $F(1, 227) = .17$ ,  $p = .685$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , or perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = .67$ ,  $p = .412$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ , nor was their interaction statistically significant,  $F(1, 227) = .48$ ,  $p = .490$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ . South Asian parents ( $M = 6.50$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) and White parents ( $M = 6.57$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) both reported high levels of belief of the story child following disclosure, and they did not discriminate between the stranger perpetrator ( $M = 6.60$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and the family friend perpetrator ( $M = 6.47$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) when reporting their tendency to believe the child either.

## Parent Responses to the Story Child's CSA Recantation

The second set of analyses examined parents' reactions to the story child's recantation of the sexual abuse allegations following their initial disclosure. As mentioned, each participant read a vignette of a child disclosing an incident of sexual abuse after which they answered questions about how they would react to this disclosure. Following this, parents were presented with a prompt stating that the child recants or takes back their initial allegation and asked how they would react using the same items that they responded to about the child's disclosure. In a second set of 2 (ethnic group: South Asian v. White) X 2 (perpetrator type: stranger or family friend) ANOVAs, we analyzed whether there were significant differences between how South Asian and White parents responded to the story child's recantation and whether participants in the known perpetrator condition responded differently than those in the stranger perpetrator condition. There were no significant effects of the covariates of parent age and parent education level; see Table 5 for more information.

**Anger toward the alleged perpetrator.** When asked how angry they would be toward the alleged perpetrator after the story child recanted their CSA allegations, we found no significant main effects of ethnic group,  $F(1, 227) = 3.47, p = .064, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .015$ , or perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = .11, p = .744, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .000$ . South Asian parents ( $M = 4.75, SD = 2.11$ ) and White parents ( $M = 4.22, SD = 2.06$ ) both reported that they would be about "neutral" to "slightly not angry" toward the perpetrator. Similarly, parents' level of anger toward the alleged perpetrator following the child's recantation did not differ if the perpetrator was a stranger ( $M = 4.44, SD = 2.02$ ) or if he was a family friend ( $M = 4.53, SD = 2.18$ ). There was no significant interaction between ethnic group and perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = .51, p = .475, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .002$ .

**Anger toward the child.** In response to parents' level of anger toward the story child following recantation, there was no main effect of ethnic group,  $F(1, 227) = 2.85, p = .093$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .012$ . Both South Asian parents ( $M = 4.75, SD = 2.11$ ) and White parents ( $M = 4.22, SD = 2.06$ ) reported that they would be "slightly angry" toward the child after they recanted. However, there was a significant main effect of perpetrator type, with parents' anger toward the child following recantation being significantly higher when the perpetrator was a family friend ( $M = 5.31, SD = 2.18$ ) than when he was a stranger ( $M = 4.70, SD = 2.02$ ),  $F(1, 227) = 5.84, p = .016$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .025$ . It is worth noting that this significant result had a small effect size. There was no significant interaction effect between ethnic group and perpetrator type for parents' anger toward the child following recantation,  $F(1, 227) = 1.31, p = .253$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .006$ .

**Worry about familial honour.** A significant main effect of ethnic group emerged concerning parents' worry about familial honour following the story child's recantation,  $F(1, 227) = 8.55, p = .004$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ . On average, South Asian parents reported being significantly more worried about familial honour ( $M = 4.77, SD = 2.03$ ) than White parents ( $M = 3.94, SD = 2.21$ ). This finding had a small effect size. There was no significant main effect of perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = .75, p = .389$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ , with parents reporting similar levels of worry about their familial honour following recantation when the alleged perpetrator was a stranger ( $M = 4.23, SD = 2.17$ ) and when he was a family friend ( $M = 4.47, SD = 2.12$ ). Parents' responses, on average, ranged from "neutral" to "slightly worried" about their familial honour following the recantation. There was also no significant ethnic group by perpetrator type interaction effect,  $F(1, 227) = .63, p = .428$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ .

**Punishing the child.** When asked how likely they would be to punish the child for recanting their allegations of abuse, there were no significant main effects of ethnic group,  $F(1,$

227) = .04,  $p = .848$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , perpetrator type,  $F(1, 227) = 1.00$ ,  $p = .318$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ , nor was there a significant interaction between the two variables,  $F(1, 227) = .03$ ,  $p = .862$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ . Both South Asian parents ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ) and White parents ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ) stated that they would be “neither likely nor unlikely” to punish the child following the recantation. Parents also did not discriminate in their likelihood to punish the child following recantation depending on whether the alleged perpetrator was a stranger ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ) or a family friend ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ).

**Calling the police.** The main effect of ethnic group was significant, with South Asian parents ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ) being less likely to call the police following recantation compared to their White counterparts ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 2.07$ ),  $F(1, 227) = 7.70$ ,  $p = .006$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ . South Asian parents tended to be “slightly unlikely” to “neither likely nor unlikely” while White parents tended to be “slightly likely” to call the police. This significant effect had a small effect size. There was no significant main effect of perpetrator type indicating that parents were no more likely to call the police following recantation when the perpetrator was a family friend ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 2.11$ ) than when he was a stranger ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ),  $F(1, 227) = .73$ ,  $p = .394$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . There was no significant ethnic group X perpetrator type interaction for parents’ likelihood of calling the police following CSA recantation,  $F(1, 227) = .36$ ,  $p = .550$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ .

**Believing the child.** When asked how likely they would be to believe what the story child said about the abuse allegation being a lie, there was no main effect of ethnic group,  $F(1, 227) = 1.84$ ,  $p = .176$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .008$ , such that South Asian parents ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ) and White parents ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ) both reported that they would be “neither likely nor unlikely” to believe the child. However, we found a significant main effect of perpetrator type,

with parents' expressed likelihood of believing the child's recantation being significantly lower when the alleged perpetrator was a stranger ( $M = 3.80, SD = 1.80$ ) as opposed to a family friend ( $M = 4.50, SD = 1.81$ ),  $F(1, 227) = 8.27, p = .004$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .035$ . Parents tended to respond by stating they would be "slightly unlikely" to "neither likely nor unlikely" to believe what the story child said about the abuse allegation being a lie when the perpetrator was a stranger while parents in the family friend condition tended to respond with "slightly likely" to believe the child's recantation. This significant main effect had a small effect size. Lastly, there was no significant interaction between ethnic group and perpetrator type for parents' likelihood of believing the child following recantation,  $F(1, 227) = .105, p = .746$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ .

### **Exploratory Analyses**

In order to assess which other variables may impact parents' reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation, we first conducted a series of independent-sample t-tests to gauge whether there were significant differences between the White and South Asian groups on acculturation, religiosity, or gender ideology. To gauge level of acculturation, we focused on participants' responses to the mainstream subscale of the VIA as this allowed us to examine whether White and South Asian participants' level of identification with the host (Canadian) culture differed. Interestingly, we found no significant differences between South Asian and White parents in their levels of acculturation or gender ideologies. However, there was a significant difference between South Asian ( $M = 3.93, SD = 1.26$ ) and White ( $M = 2.36, SD = 1.55$ ) parents' level of religiosity,  $t(229) = 8.48, p = .006, d = 1.136$ , with a strong effect size.

As religiosity was the only significant difference that emerged between South Asian and White parents, we tested the effects of religiosity on the DVs. The religiosity scale revealed a Cronbach alpha score of .933 for the 5 items, indicating acceptable reliability. As this was an

exploratory analysis, we did not have predictions about how religiosity might affect parents' responses to the items concerning the story child's disclosure and recantation. Multiple regression analyses revealed that, in the case of disclosure, parents who scored higher on religiosity tended to also report greater anger toward the child ( $\beta = .439, p = < .001$ ), a greater likelihood of punishing the child ( $\beta = .295, p = < .001$ ), and a greater worry about the family's honour ( $\beta = .501, p = < .001$ ). Meanwhile, when the story child recanted, parents who scored higher on religiosity also tended to report greater anger toward the child ( $\beta = .203, p = .023$ ) and worry about the family's honour ( $\beta = .508, p = < .001$ ) but also a decreased likelihood of calling the police ( $\beta = .223, p = .025$ ). Note that these results speak to the effects of religiosity on parents' reactions when holding both ethnic group and perpetrator type constant.

### **Discussion**

Although a large body of research has documented that nondisclosure and recantation are significant barriers to intervening in and treating cases of CSA, the effects of ethnicity on attitudes toward CSA disclosure and recantation remain understudied. In the current study, we investigated whether South Asian and White parents differed in their reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation. To better examine the contexts (e.g., honour, community and familial bonds) in which differences between South Asian and White parents might emerge, we tested how parents perceived disclosure and recantation when the perpetrator was a stranger as opposed to a close family friend (that is, familiar versus unfamiliar to the parent and family). Interestingly, South Asian and White parents tended to respond similarly with support and belief in the story child when she disclosed the sexual abuse. A majority of the significant ethnic group and perpetrator type differences emerged instead when the child recanted the abuse allegations.

## **Parent Responses to Disclosure and Recantation**

We found support for our hypothesis that both South Asian and White parents would generally respond to disclosure in a supportive manner. For instance, in general, parents were very likely to believe the child's account of the events, expressed anger toward the alleged perpetrator and little anger toward the story child, and were likely to call the police and not punish the child. Worry about the family's honour was also rarely a concern for both South Asian and White parents when the child disclosed the abuse. These results provide reassurance that parents are typically receptive, at least hypothetically, to their children disclosing an incident of sexual abuse. This supportiveness may help prevent recantation and promote the child's psychological adjustment following abuse (Elliott & Briere, 1994; Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Lovett, 2004; Malloy et al., 2007). While research has found that parents' reactions to abuse disclosure have implications for whether children recant, there is little to no literature concerning how parents react to CSA recantation. Given that recantation is relatively common (Malloy et al., 2007), understanding how parents respond when children recant their CSA allegations is important for determining next steps and gaining insight into how children's cases move through the legal system.

We found that when the story child recanted their CSA allegations, parents generally responded with ambivalence or had negative reactions. For instance, they responded neutrally toward the alleged perpetrator, leaning toward being "slightly not angry," and also displayed anger at the child. Since parents read that the story child takes back her original allegations, anger at the child may come as a result of believing that the child has truly lied about the abuse. While parents were very likely to believe the child's CSA disclosure, when the story child recanted and said that "it was all a lie," parents responded less definitively, being, on average,

“neither likely nor unlikely” to believe the recantation. There are serious implications of CSA recantations such that they have been shown to lower the credibility of the child’s disclosure (Morison & Greene, 1992) and can impact the child’s believability for legal proceedings (Goodman et al., 1992; Lamb et al., 1994; London et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007; Pipe et al., 2013). If parents are inclined to believe immediately that a child is truly lying about the abuse, this can have serious consequences for the child’s adjustment and the perpetrator’s prosecution.

In terms of behavioural responses, parents in all conditions were very unlikely to report that they would punish the story child following disclosure of the sexual abuse, again indicating high supportiveness. However, when the child recanted their account of the events, parents in all conditions expressed less conclusive support, with most parents responding that they were more neutral about their likelihood of punishing the child. It is understandable that parents would react to the recantation by punishing the child for lying as prior research on parents’ attitudes around children’s honesty and dishonesty found that parents view punishment to be an appropriate response to children’s lying behaviour (Malloy et al., 2019). Nonetheless, it is concerning that parents may consider punishing a child who recants an incident of abuse instead of further investigating the matter and questioning why the child was now claiming to have lied about the abuse occurring. As discussed in the literature, there are several reasons why a child may recant allegations of CSA, including negative reactions to disclosure or as Rieser (1991) suggests, some children may use recantation to escape the disruption caused by the abuse or disclosure and seek to restore a pre-disclosure state of relative harmony. Similarly, research suggests that children who recant often reaffirm their original allegations, suggesting that recantation is a temporary event in their disclosure that may have serious consequences on how recipients of disclosure perceive their testimony and whether the allegations are investigated further (Malloy et al., 2007,



2016). Through their indecision around punishing the child, it may seem that parents are not exploring alternative reasons for the story child's recantation and are inclined to believe that she was truly lying about the abuse.

When considering parents' likelihood of involving legal authorities, our hypothesis was supported as we found that parents were less likely to call the police when the alleged perpetrator was a family friend, perhaps as a result of feeling loyalty or the need to maintain social harmony within the community or family. Recall that, in several studies, researchers have found that CSA is rarely reported to the authorities (Mullen et al., 1993; Northcott, 2013; Russell, 1983). Moreover, previous research demonstrates that CSA disclosure rates are lower and often delayed when abuse is perpetrated by a close, known individual (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Kogan, 2004; Lyon et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2000; Somer & Szwarcberg, 2001). When evaluating reactions to the recantation, parents' likelihood of calling the police was quite low. It is not possible to know how parents interpreted the question regarding their likelihood of calling the police following the story child's recantation as parents might take this action to retract the child's original allegations, update and advance the current investigation, and/or ask for another formal interview, among other reasons. Future studies should use follow-up questions to gain an understanding of not just whether parents would call the police following a recantation but parents' motivations for calling the police following a recantation.

### **South Asian and White Ethnic Group Differences**

As South Asian ethnicity distinctly emphasizes certain values such as honour, respect, and modesty (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006) it is important to consider how South Asian parents may react differently to a CSA disclosure and recantation compared to other ethnic groups as this can impact whether and how children in these communities receive support. We hypothesized that

South Asian parents would be more concerned about their family's honour in cases of sexual abuse which is often a taboo topic considering the implications it has for a child's purity (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006). However, South Asian parents in our study did not significantly differ in their concern for their immediate family's honour compared to their White counterparts when the story child disclosed the abuse. Significant differences appeared, however, when the child recanted the abuse, with South Asian parents reporting greater concern for their family's honour than White parents when the child took back their CSA allegations. An experience of child sexual abuse—especially one that is recanted by the child—may be regarded as shameful, especially within the South Asian community which emphasizes communal ties. As supported by research, CSA disclosures have even led the community to blame the child victim and/or their parents (Rodger et al. 2020). Perhaps parents in our study viewed the child's abuse and/or recantation as a reflection of their own failures as a parent and therefore anticipated backlash from the community about their reputation. Future research should test these possibilities as parents' personalizations of the abuse can focus the attention away from the fact that children rarely lie about their experiences of sexual abuse (O'Donohue et al., 2018) and that recantation can occur for many reasons (Malloy et al., 2007).

When considering parents' likelihood of involving legal authorities, we expected that South Asian parents would be less likely to call the police when the perpetrator was a family friend. However, this pattern was evident for both South Asian and White parents when the story child disclosed the abuse. On the other hand, when the story child recanted the abuse, compared to their White counterparts who were "slightly likely" to call the police, South Asian parents were significantly less likely to intervene formally. However, as mentioned earlier, calling the police following recantation may not necessitate greater support for the child as it may be to

recant the original allegations. Thus, this finding must be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, parents may be hesitant to involve the authorities as it may exacerbate the situation and spread to the community, a fear that many South Asians may have considering the importance of familial reputation and honour among South Asian individuals (Gill & Harrison, 2019; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006).

### **Perpetrator Type Differences**

Research indicates that children abused by a family member are less likely to disclose or delay disclosure compared to those who experience extrafamilial abuse (Smith et al., 2000; Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Kogan, 2004; Lyon et al., 2010). Importantly, perpetrator identity may impact parents' level of support for the child and their likelihood of taking retributive actions against the alleged perpetrator. For instance, while parents tended to believe the child when they disclosed the abuse, regardless of the perpetrator's identity, when the child recanted the abuse, parents were more likely to believe that the child was truly lying when the alleged perpetrator was a family friend as opposed to a stranger. This highlights the impact that familial and/or communal bonds can have on parents' perceptions and attitudes toward a child's allegations as they may feel divided loyalty and greater skepticism about the child's honesty when the alleged perpetrator is known to the family. As noted by Ullman (2007), children are more likely to experience disbelief and a lack of support when the abuser is a relative compared to a stranger, which may explain why parents were likely to believe the recantation more so when the perpetrator was a family friend. Similarly, parents expressed more anger toward the story child after she recanted the abuse allegations against a family friend as opposed to recanting allegations against a stranger, thereby highlighting the importance of maintaining social harmony among close friends and family. Interestingly, we found a significant interaction

between ethnic group and perpetrator type for disclosure such that South Asian parents tended to be more angry toward the alleged perpetrator when he was a stranger compared to White parents. This may, again, emphasize the importance of the community for South Asians as abuse perpetrated by someone outside of the community may be regarded with greater outrage than by someone within who may have some personal connection or standing with the family.

With regards to formal action, and as hypothesized, parents were significantly more likely to call the police when a stranger had allegedly abused the story child instead of a family friend. There were no perpetrator type differences in whether parents called the police when the story child recanted. As noted, it is difficult to interpret the latter finding without more information on why parents would call the police in the recantation scenario. This may be a result of parents' embarrassment or shame resulting from the child having lied and causing disruption in the family or community. Or, the parent may not believe the recantation and not wish to damage their child's chances of being heard and protected within the legal system.

### **Limitations**

One major limitation regarding this research is that it was conducted in English and in an online format. This restricts the population to individuals who are fluent in English and who have access to technology. Undoubtedly, this misses individuals such as South Asian parents who have moved to Canada and lack the relevant English proficiency to complete this survey and those who cannot afford or do not know how to operate the technology required to participate. To combat this, future studies can provide translated forms of the survey and make it available in multiple different formats such as pencil and paper. These alternative methods may target a subset of the South Asian community that perhaps holds more traditional views and values,

including honour, and thus may respond differently to vignettes concerning the disclosure and recantation of child sexual abuse.

Additionally, we only compared South Asian and White parents and did not examine how other ethnic groups would react to the vignette concerning CSA disclosure and recantation. The distribution of ethnic groups in Canada places White/Caucasian as the majority group (Statistics Canada, 2022), providing an appropriate comparison group for our research that is representative of the Canadian population at large. Moreover, while South Asians only make up 7.1% of the Canadian population according to the 2021 Census, there is a great diversity among this group in terms of individuals' country of origin, languages spoken, and religious and cultural practices (Statistics Canada, 2022). Thus, including several different ethnic groups may introduce other factors specific to their own cultures and perhaps some level of overlap—all of which could be valuable for future studies to consider.

We did not find major differences between South Asian and White parents on gender ideology or acculturation. Thus, it is likely that there was more variation within groups than between. We did not assess the potential impact of how long parents had lived in Canada, but it may be that the parents in our study had sufficiently acculturated to Canada such that their reactions did not differ significantly from other Canadian parents, as suggested by the similar scores between South Asian and White parents on the mainstream subscale of the acculturation index. It may also be that individuals who immigrate to a foreign country have a different set of characteristics than those who do not seek this type of major life change. We found that our South Asian parents were also significantly younger and more highly educated than our White parents as well. This could have played a role in the lack of ethnic group differences found. However, while we tested these covariates in all of the analyses, we only found two significant

covariate effects on parents' responses to the CSA disclosure. Moreover, since there is ambiguity around how White parents may have interpreted the heritage subscale of the VIA, we did not analyze ethnic group differences on this subscale. In the future, it may be worthwhile to investigate whether parents' level of identification with their heritage culture can impact their responses to children's abuse disclosures and recantations.

It is important to note that since we did not provide much context in the vignettes, such as the child's emotional demeanour, it is difficult to say how these contextual variables, which likely would be present in a real-world disclosure or recantation, may have influenced parents' perceptions. To maintain experimental control and ensure that parents were not relating personally to the vignette in different ways, we did not provide much contextual information such as how close the family friend was to the family.

In order to reduce variability in responses, we controlled for the gender of the child victim within the vignette by only including child victims who were girls. This is because the research suggests that South Asian women face exceedingly greater expectations of chastity and purity (Bhopal, 2019; Dasgupta, 2007; Mahalingam, 2007) and girls are more common victims of CSA (Honor, 2010; Snyder, 2000). This is not to suggest that disclosure perceptions for boys who experience CSA should not be studied. Introducing a boy story child would be valuable in future research as boys may also be less inclined to disclose because of ethnic and gendered barriers (London et al., 2005).

Lastly, the scenarios presented in the family friend and stranger vignettes were slightly different, thus introducing confounds into the study. The situation in which the family friend was alleged to have abused the story child involved a gathering within the home wherein the abuse occurred in the parents' bedroom, whereas the situation in which the stranger was alleged to have

abused the story child involved a play date at a school friend's house wherein the school friend's neighbour abused the child in the bathroom. It may be that parents reacted differently to the stranger vignette because the abuse occurred outside of their home while in the care of other adults, whereas the situation with the family friend occurred under their own roof. Moreover, the sexual abuse that occurred in the bedroom as opposed to the bathroom may have been perceived differently. For instance, parents may have been less willing to believe that abuse had truly occurred in the bathroom when there was a perhaps more legitimate reason for the adult to have touched the child, albeit in a non-sexual way. It is possible that this scenario was more believable as a "misunderstanding" versus intentional as in the bedroom scenario depicted in the family friend vignette. Future studies should administer vignettes that avoid such confounds.

### **Practical Implications and Next Steps**

The associations between CSA and psychological and physical problems (e.g., suicide, depression, drug abuse) are well established (Collin-Vézina et al., 2013; Dube et al., 2001). Given that disclosure and parental support have been consistently linked with the adjustment of sexually abused children (Elliott & Carnes, 2001), the present research provides insight into parents' attitudes about disclosure patterns considering factors such as ethnic group and perpetrator relationship to the victim. This research can inform initiatives to educate parents about appropriate reactions to disclosure and recantation and how to respond supportively when there may be concerns related to ethnicity or culture like familial honour. Furthermore, this research can inform professionals such as pediatricians, teachers, and policymakers to increase awareness and sensitivity to factors that contribute to parents' reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation. Disclosure research is imperative to intervention and treatment for victims, as without children's disclosures, most sexual abuse would likely remain unidentified. An important

next step is to test educational and community service programs that encourage CSA disclosure and understand whether these resources include any relevant understanding or guidance related to ethnicity. Moreover, since the present study found that parents tended to react with ambivalence following recantation, community service programs can use this information to better design their interventions to maximize both understanding of recantations and support for the child victim.

When exploring other potential variables that may impact parents' reactions, we found that levels of religiosity significantly differed for South Asian and White parents. We found that for both disclosure and recantation, religiosity increased parents' likelihood of being angry toward the child and worrying about the family's honour. Reporting high levels of religiosity also increased parents' likelihood to punish the story child following disclosure and to be less likely to involve the police after the child recanted. Since religion can be connected to ethnicity (Saroglou & Cohen, 2011), it is important to further investigate the potential role of religiosity in CSA disclosure and how it is evaluated by others. Regardless of which religion participants ascribed to, religious devotion was related to parents' reactions toward CSA disclosure and recantation. Future studies could also explore how these individual differences, as opposed to or in conjunction with ethnic group differences, can affect reactions to CSA disclosure and recantation. For instance, if a social worker is working with parents who report high levels of religiosity and worries about their child's purity, this is important information as it may place the child at a greater risk for recantation. While this is a meaningful avenue to explore, our study focused more on ethnic group differences in general; thus, a separate study should explore the unique effects of religiosity on parents' perceptions of disclosure and recantation.



The present research sheds light on how parents perceive the disclosure and recantation of child sexual abuse allegations, at least in hypothetical situations. Using vignettes allowed us to systematically vary a key variable of interest—perpetrator type. By focusing on South Asian parents in particular, we were able to assess the perceptions of an understudied group, but one whose general values suggested a need for investigation in this area. The current study represents a first step and points to additional areas of inquiry for future studies.

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## Appendix A

### *Screening Questions:*

Please describe your parental status (check all that apply):

- Biological parent
- Adoptive parent
- Legal parent
- Step-parent
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please specify:

How many children do you have? Please indicate a number.

What is the gender of your first child?

- Boy
- Girl
- Non-binary
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

How old is your first child? Please indicate in years:

What is the gender of your second child?

- Boy
- Girl
- Non-binary
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

How old is your second child? Please indicate in years:

ETC...

### *Demographic Questions:*

What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Other, please specify:
- Prefer not to say

Please select your age in years:

What ethnic/cultural background do you identify the most with? Select all that apply.

- Aboriginal (e.g., Inuit, Métis, North American Indian)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
- Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latin American
- South Asian (e.g., Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Indian, Bengali)
- South East Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Indonesian)
- White (Caucasian)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

IF NO:

- In which country were you born? \_\_\_\_  
Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer.
- At what age did you move to Canada? \_\_\_\_  
Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer.
- In which country was your mother born? \_\_\_\_  
Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer.
- In which country was your father born? \_\_\_\_  
Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer.

What language(s) are spoken at home? Check all that apply.

- English
- French
- Other, please specify:
- Prefer not to say

What is your religion?

- Buddhism (please specify, i.e., Theravāda, East Asian Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Navayāna)



- Christianity (please specify, i.e., Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodoxy)
- Hinduism (please specify, i.e., Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Smartism)
- Islam (please specify, i.e., Sunni, Shia, Sufism)
- Jainism (please specify, Digambara or Svetambara)
- Judaism (please specify, i.e., Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, other)
- Sikhism
- Other:
- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Prefer not to say

How religious do you consider yourself to be?

- 1= Not at all religious
- 2= Somewhat not religious
- 3= Slightly not religious
- 4= Slightly religious
- 5= Somewhat religious
- 6= Very religious
- 7= Prefer not to say

Adjusted, 5-item Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Scale (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997):

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

My faith impacts many of my decisions (i.e. what I drink and eat, what I wear, with whom I socialize)

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

My religious faith is extremely important to me

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

I go to church/mosque/temple/synagogue,etc. mainly because I enjoy seeing people there whom I know.

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

I go to church/mosque/temple/synagogue,etc. mainly to better engage with my faith.

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

I consider myself active in my place of worship (ex. Church, mosque, etc.)

- 1= Strongly disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Slightly disagree
- 4= Slightly agree
- 5= Agree
- 6= Strongly agree
- 7= Prefer not to say

What is your highest degree earned? (Check all that apply)

- No degree, certificate or diploma
- High school graduate

- High school graduate, some post-secondary
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma
- University degree
- Masters degree
- Ph.D.
- MD
- JD
- Other, please specify:
- Prefer not to answer

What is your annual household income? (please check one)

- Less than \$15,000
- \$15,000 - \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$35,000
- \$35,000 - \$45,000
- \$45,000 - \$55,000
- \$55,000 - \$75,000
- \$75,000 - \$100,000
- Over \$100,000
- Prefer not to answer

Do you live with a spouse or partner?

- Yes
- No
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

What is your spouse/partner's gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

Please indicate your spouse/partner's age in years:

What ethnic/cultural background does your spouse/partner identify the most with? Select all that apply.

- Aboriginal (e.g., Inuit, Métis, North American Indian)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
- Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latin American
- South Asian (e.g., Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Indian, Bengali)
- South East Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Indonesian)
- White (Caucasian)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Was your spouse born in Canada?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

In which country was your spouse/partner born? Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer:

At what age did your spouse/partner move to Canada? Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer:

In which country was your spouse/partner's mother born? Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer:

In which country was your spouse/partner's father born? Please leave this blank if you choose not to answer:

What is your spouse/partner's religion?

- Buddhism (please specify, i.e., Theravāda, East Asian Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Navayāna)
- Christianity (please specify, i.e., Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodoxy)
- Hinduism (please specify, i.e., Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Smartism)
- Islam (please specify, i.e., Sunni, Shia, Sufism)
- Jainism (please specify, Digambara or Svetambara)
- Judaism (please specify, i.e., Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, other)
- Sikhism

- Other:
- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Prefer not to say

Do you live with your children full-time?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please specify:

## **Appendix B**

### ***Vignettes:***

***Disclosure vignette with stranger perpetrator.*** Imagine you are the parent of a 7-year-old girl and you live with her and your spouse. Your daughter recently went for a playdate at her school friend's house. The following week, your daughter approaches you saying she wants to share something with you. Your daughter says that at the playdate, as she was playing a few games, her friend's parents stepped out of the house to get groceries and invited their adult neighbour who you have never met before to watch over the girls. Your daughter tells you that as she was using the bathroom, the neighbour came into the bathroom and locked the door behind them. She says that he told her that he would help her use the bathroom and reached under her skirt and touched her genitals. She tells you that after about 5 minutes, he told her that she must not tell anyone about the help he gave because it was their secret. Your daughter then tells you that he left the bathroom, leaving her alone there.

***Recantation prompt with stranger perpetrator.*** A few days after your daughter told you this, she says that it was all a lie and that her friend's neighbour never touched her.

***Disclosure vignette with known perpetrator.*** Imagine you are the parent of a 7-year-old girl and you live with her and your spouse. You and your partner held a gathering with other

relatives and family friends. A week later, your daughter approaches you saying she wants to share something with you. She tells you that while everyone was outside in the backyard enjoying the party, she was playing hide-and-seek with her other cousins and decided to hide in your room. She says that a few minutes later, a close friend of yours who you have known for a very long time came in and after noticing her, hid next to her behind the bed. Your 7-year old then tells you that your close friend told her that he wanted to play another game while she hid from her cousins and reached under her skirt and touched her genitals. She says that after about 5 minutes, he told her that she must not tell anyone about the game because it is their secret. Your daughter then tells you that he returned to the party in the backyard, leaving her alone in the room.

***Recantation prompt with known perpetrator.*** A few days after your daughter told you this, she says that it was all a lie and that your close friend never touched her.

After reading the vignette, participants were asked to respond to three open-ended questions that explored their general reactions to the vignette, including how they would feel upon hearing this, how they think their immediate family would respond, and what they would do next. They then responded to 13 Likert-type questions regarding their affective and behavioral responses to the vignette. Items were self-constructed and specifically designed for the proposed study. The response categories ranged from 1-7, for instance, “How angry would you be toward the alleged perpetrator (neighbour/family friend)?” (1= *Very angry* to 7= *Not angry at all*) and “How likely would you be to call the police?” (1= *Very unlikely* to 7= *Very likely*). For a full list of the items, see Appendix B.

### ***Affective and Behavioral Response Questions***

How would you feel upon hearing this?

Disclosure question: How do you think your immediate family would respond to what your daughter said happened at (the party/her school friend's house)?

Recantation question: How do you think your immediate family would respond to what your daughter said about it all being a lie?

What would you do next?

Please respond to the statements with an estimate of how likely you are to respond following the disclosure/recantation:

1. How angry would you be toward your child?\*

1= Very angry, 2= Somewhat angry, 3= Slightly angry, 4= Neutral, 5= Slightly not angry, 6= Somewhat not angry, 7 = Not angry at all

2. How angry would you be toward the (neighbour/family friend)?\*

3. How guilty would you feel about what your daughter told you?\*

4. How surprised would you be to hear about what your daughter told you?\*

5. How worried would you be about your immediate family's honour?\*

6. How likely are you to believe what your daughter told you?

7. How likely are you to call the police?

8. How likely are you to tell a friend?

9. How likely are you to punish your child?

10. How likely are you to comfort your child?

11. How likely are you to confront the (neighbour/family friend)?

12. How likely are you to listen to what the (neighbour/family friend) said happened with an open mind?

13. How likely are you to believe what the (neighbour/family friend) said about what happened at the (school friend's house/party)?

\*= reverse code items to match the 7-point Likert scale

1= Very unlikely

2= Somewhat unlikely

3= Slightly unlikely

4= Neither likely nor unlikely

5= Slightly likely

6= Somewhat likely

7= Very likely

## **Appendix C**

### *Acculturation Scale*

#### **Vancouver Index of Acculturation**

1. I often participate in my heritage cultural traditions.
2. I often participate in mainstream Canadian cultural traditions.
3. I would be willing to marry a person from my heritage culture.
4. I would be willing to marry a Canadian person.
5. I enjoy social activities with people from the same heritage culture as myself.
6. I enjoy social activities with typical Canadian people.
7. I am comfortable working with people of the same heritage culture as myself.
8. I am comfortable working with typical Canadian people.
9. I enjoy entertainment (e.g., movies, music) from my heritage culture.
10. I enjoy Canadian entertainment (e.g., movies, music).



11. I often behave in ways that are typical of my heritage culture.
12. I often behave in ways that are typical of Canadian culture.
13. It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of my heritage culture.
14. It is important for me to maintain or develop Canadian cultural practices.
15. I believe in the values of my heritage culture.
16. I believe in mainstream Canadian values.
17. I enjoy the jokes and humor of my heritage culture.
18. I enjoy typical Canadian jokes and humor.
19. I am interested in having friends from my heritage culture.
20. I am interested in having Canadian friends.

1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor disagree,  
5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7= Strongly agree

*Gender Ideology Scales:*

**Male Role Norms Scale** (Thompson & Pleck, 1986)

**\*\* bolded items are used in the questionnaire**

Status Norm Scale

1. Success in his work has to be a man's central goal in this life.
2. The best way for a young man to get the respect of other people is to get a job, take it seriously, and do it well.
3. A man owes it to his family to work at the best paying job he can get.
4. A man should generally work overtime to make more money whenever he has the chance.
- 5. A man always deserves the respect of his wife and children.**

6. It is essential for a man to always have the respect and admiration of everyone who knows him.

7. A man should never back down in the face of trouble.

**8. I always like a man who's totally sure of himself.**

**9. A man should always think everything out coolly and logically, and have rational reasons for everything he does.**

10. A man should always try to project an air of confidence even if he really doesn't feel confident inside.

**11. A man must stand on his own two feet and never depend on other people to help him do things.**

Toughness Norm Scale

**12. When a man is feeling a little pain he should try not to let it show very much.**

**13. Nobody respects a man very much who frequently talks about his worries, fears, and problems.**

14. A good motto for a man would be "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

15. I think a young man should try to become physically tough, even if he's not big.

**16. Fists are sometimes the only way to get out of a bad situation.**

**17. A real man enjoys a bit of danger now and then.**

**18. In some kinds of situations a man should be ready to use his fists, even if his wife or his girlfriend would object.**

**\*19. A man should always refuse to get into a fight, even if there seems to be no way to avoid it.**

### Anti-femininity Norm Scale

20. It bothers me when a man does something that I consider "feminine."

**21. A man whose hobbies are cooking, sewing, and going to the ballet probably wouldn't appeal to me.**

**22. It is a bit embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman.**

23. Unless he was really desperate, I would probably advise a man to keep looking rather than accept a job as a secretary.

24. If I heard about a man who was a hairdresser and a gourmet cook, I might wonder how masculine he was.

**\*25. I think it's extremely good for a boy to be taught to cook, sew, clean, the house, and take care of younger children.**

**26. I might find it a little silly or embarrassing if a male friend of mine cried over a sad love scene in a movie.**

\*Items are reverse coded

Response Options:

1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor disagree,

5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7= Strongly agree

### **Femininity Ideology Scale** (Levant et al., 2007)

Factor 1: Stereotypic Images and Activities

1. Women should have large breasts.
2. A woman should have a petite body.

3. Women should have soft voices.
4. **A woman should wear attractive clothing, shoes, lingerie and bathing suits, even if not comfortable.**
5. It is unlikely that a pregnant woman would be attractive.
6. **A girl should be taught how to catch a husband.**
7. **It is expected that a woman who expresses irritation or anger must be going through P.M.S.**
8. Girls should not enjoy “tomboy” activities.
9. It is more appropriate for a female to be a teacher than a principal.
10. **A woman should not be expected to do mechanical things.**
11. **A woman should not show anger.**

Factor 2: Dependency/Deference

1. **Women should not want to succeed in the business world because men will not want to marry them.**
2. **A woman should not expect to be sexually satisfied by her partner.**
3. **A woman should not make more money than her partner.**
4. A woman’s worth should be measured by the success of her partner.
5. A woman should not consider her career as important as a man’s.
6. **A woman should not be competitive.**
7. Women should have men make decisions for them.
8. **Women should act helpless to attract a man.**
9. A woman should not marry a younger man.
10. **A woman should not initiate sex.**

### Factor 3: Purity

- 1. Women should not read pornographic material.**
- 2. A woman should remain a virgin until she is married.**
- 3. It is not acceptable for a woman to masturbate.**
4. A woman should not tell dirty jokes.
5. A woman should not swear.
- 6. A woman should not have a baby until she is married.**
- 7. A woman should be dependent on religion and spirituality for guidance.**
- 8. Women should dress conservatively so they do not appear loose.**
- 9. If a woman chooses to have an abortion, she should not feel guilty.\***

### Factor 4: Caretaking

1. An appropriate female occupation is nursing.
- 2. When someone's feelings are hurt, a woman should try to make them feel better.**
3. A woman should know how people are feeling
- 4. Women should be gentle.**
- 5. A woman's natural role should be the caregiver of the family.**
- 6. A woman should be responsible for teaching family values to her children.**
7. A woman should be responsible for making and organizing family plans.

### Factor 5: Emotionality

- 1. It is expected that a woman will be viewed as overly emotional.**
- 2. It is expected that women will have a hard time handling stress without getting emotional.**
3. It is expected that women in leadership roles will not be taken seriously.

4. **It is expected that a single woman is less fulfilled than a married woman.**
5. It is expected that a woman will engage in domestic hobbies such as sewing and decorating.
6. It is likely that a woman who gives up custody of her children will not be respected.
7. **It is expected that women will discuss their feelings with one another.**
8. It is expected that women will not think logically.

1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor disagree, 5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7= Strongly agree

#### Chastity Scale (Mahalingam, 2007)

1. Only a virtuous woman can be a good woman.
2. Sacrificing her needs in life is the hallmark of a good woman.
3. **A good woman always puts other people's needs before her own.**
4. A virtuous woman has sacred powers.
5. The power of a woman comes from her capacity to be patient.
6. Only a virtuous woman can be a good mother.
7. A good woman never loses her temper.
8. **A virtuous woman has the capacity to endure any sufferings in life without complaining.**
9. A virtuous woman will be greatly rewarded in her next life.
10. A curse from a virtuous woman could be harmful.
11. Other than her husband, a virtuous woman will never even think of another man even in her thoughts.

12. Only good women can give birth to a son.
13. A virtuous woman will never have sex with anyone other than her husband.
- 14. A good woman always obeys her husband.**
- 15. Only a virtuous woman can uphold the honour of the family.**
16. A good woman will always adjust with her husband.
17. A virtuous woman will never divorce her husband.
18. A woman should be a virgin at the time of her marriage.
19. A good woman will die as a sumangali (an auspicious woman).
20. A virtuous woman is a sacred woman.
21. A virtuous woman has divine powers.
22. A virtuous woman is like a goddess.
- 23. A virtuous woman will never even look at other men.**

1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree 4= Neither Agree nor disagree,  
5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7= Strongly agree

*Attention Checks*

- What is the gender and birth date of your oldest child? (MM/DD/YYYY)
- Select 2 for this item.

**Table 1.***Sociodemographic Characteristics of South Asian and White Participants*

Characteristic	South Asian		White	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	88	64.2	55	58.5
Male	49	35.8	39	41.5
<b>Highest level of education</b>				
High school graduate	7	5.1	15	16.0
High school graduate, some post-secondary	4	2.9	6	6.4
Post-secondary certificate or diploma	12	8.8	29	30.9
University degree	85	62.0	31	33
Masters degree	26	19.0	12	12.8
Ph.D.	2	1.5	0	0
M.D.	0	0.0	1	1.1
J.D.	1	0.7	0	0
<b>Religion</b>				
Buddhism	1	0.7	0	0
Christianity	11	8.0	44	46.8
Hinduism	56	40.9	0	0
Judaism	0	0.0	1	1.1
Islam	39	28.5	1	1.1
Sikhism	17	12.4	0	0.0
Atheist	5	3.6	27	28.7
Agnostic	2	1.5	8	8.5
Other	0	0.0	4	4.3
Prefer not to say	4	2.9	9	9.6
<b>Household income</b>				
Less than \$15,000	2	1.5	1	1.1



\$15,000 - \$25,000	2	1.5	3	3.2
\$25,000 - \$35,000	10	7.3	2	2.1
\$35,000 - \$45,000	4	2.9	4	4.3
\$45,000 - \$55,000	11	8.0	11	11.7
\$55,000 - \$75,000	18	13.1	19	20.2
\$75,000 - \$100,000	37	27.0	20	21.3
Over \$100,000	46	33.6	33	35.1
Prefer not to say	6	4.4	1	1.1

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*Note.* South Asian participants were on average 30.92 years old ( $SD = 13.45$ ) and White participants were on average 41.86 years old ( $SD = 7.26$ ).

**Table 2.***Effects of Religiosity on Parents' Reactions to CSA Disclosure*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		<i>p</i>
			LL	UL	
Angry at Perpetrator	.045	.034	-.022	.111	.189
Angry at Child	.439	.100	.242	.636	<.001
Worried about family honour	.502	.110	.285	.719	<.001
Punishing the child	.295	.071	.155	.434	<.001
Calling the police	.084	.062	-.039	.207	.170
believing the child	.079	.053	-.026	.183	.140

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

**Table 3.***Effects of Religiosity on Parents' Reactions to CSA Recantation*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		<i>p</i>
			LL	UL	
Angry at Perpetrator	-.140	.101	.166	-.338	.058
Angry at Child	.203	.088	.023	.028	.377
Worried about family honour	.508	.096	.320	.696	<.001
Punishing the child	.005	.094	-.181	.190	.962
Calling the police	.223	.099	.028	.417	.025
Believing the child	-.043	.087	-.214	.128	.620

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

**Table 4.***Covariate Analysis of Age and Education Level for Parents' Reactions to CSA Disclosure*

Effect	Estimate	MS	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<b><u>Participant Age</u></b>				
Angry at perpetrator	0.290	0.189	0.594	0.008
Angry at child	3.290	12.530	0.079	0.088
Worried about family honour	0.188	0.914	0.668	0.005
Punishing the child	0.757	1.932	0.390	0.022
Calling the police	8.002	12.574	.008*	0.191
Believing the child	1.960	3.001	0.171	0.055
<b><u>Participant Education</u></b>				
Angry at perpetrator	5.044	2.440	0.026*	0.022
Angry at child	0.643	2.995	0.423	0.003
Worried about family honour	0.014	0.079	0.907	0.000
Punishing the child	1.251	2.898	0.264	0.006
Calling the police	2.296	3.869	0.131	0.010
Believing the child	2.905	3.548	0.090	0.013

Note. \*Significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 5.***Covariate Analysis of Age and Education Level for Parents' Reactions to CSA Recantation*

Effect	Estimate	MS	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<b><u>Participant Age</u></b>				
Angry at perpetrator	.175	.769	.678	.005
Angry at child	2.141	6.865	.153	.059
Worried about family honour	1.469	6.356	.234	.041
Punishing the child	.285	1.100	.597	.008
Calling the police	.001	.002	.979	.000
Believing the child	1.496	4.704	.230	.042
<b><u>Participant Education</u></b>				
Angry at perpetrator	2.083	9.140	.150	.009
Angry at child	.020	.069	.887	.000
Worried about family honour	.030	.132	.863	.000
Punishing the child	.308	1.191	.579	.001
Calling the police	.330	1.401	.566	.001
Believing the child	2.544	8.216	.112	.011

Note. \*Significant at the  $p < .05$  level.