CHAPTER 1

Trans-Nationalism and the Extended/Joint Family: Reconceptualising Youth, Work Options and Preferences among Indian Youth in Durban, South Africa

Anand Singh

INTRODUCTION

I begin this paper with two anecdotal incidents that lend itself to the issues that are covered in this paper on emerging studies on youth and to the changing values towards work and identity among people of Indian origin in Durban, South Africa. “I would really like to go to work in London after I finish school because a lot of my friends are thinking about doing this kind of thing”, a seventeen year-old matric student (grade 12) replied to a question about what he wanted to do after he completed secondary school. An assertive and loud statement was made by his mother to catch the attention of all who made up the gathering: “It is important for young Indian children to get a good pass in school and go to a university or technical college for a degree or diploma. After that they can decide for themselves what to do with their lives. I have no problem if he wants to work overseas but he must get a proper education first. Without that no Indian in this country is ever going to survive successfully…Affirmative action will just keep our children out work here. With a degree or diploma he can go anywhere in the world and survive.” All of the family that were present nodded with approval and the conversation proceeded to an intense discussion on why anyone below the age of 21 years should not venture out on their own in a foreign country. The family approved of the idea in principle but felt that some form of tertiary education was fundamental to their children’s development and to work overseas. This period was accepted as one that would expose them to greater experience in life and prepare them for a possible work venture or permanent relocation to another country. The role of the family and protection by their parents until their early twenties was spoken about with unanimous agreement and as though it was an exclusively Indian tradition that is unmatched among other communities of the world.

In an unrelated occasion another mother was asked by her relative about her physiotherapist daughter who migrated to work in Toronto, Canada. She replied: “Oh she is very well thank you – working with a group of physicians in a private practice...She is 26 years old now. It is time for her to tell us if she has met someone to settle down with or she must return home to get married and go back if wants to. This is becoming a real botheration for us. We do not mind her returning to Canada or going anywhere else in the world because the violence in this country is becoming just too much.” The conversation centred upon the need for individuals to marry around their mid-twenties, particularly women, since an age beyond 30 years is often considered as too old in the Indian community in Durban to make one sufficiently legible for marriage.

Three factors emerge out of these conversations that are characteristic of the mindset of middle and upper-class people of Indian origin in Durban viz. parental responsibility and protection towards their children up to a relatively late age of their early twenties, ensuring their education up to tertiary level and finding a suitable marriage partner, even if it is after their mid-twenties. “Protection” in post-apartheid South Africa would incorporate shielding children against affirmative action policies that gives priority to Africans in employment and other benefits, as well as against the widespread violence that prevails in the country. In each of these factors age is of some significance and it highlights the roles, responsibilities and cultural expectations that children and their parents have towards one another. While the close-knit bonds of Indian families and their conservatism are often articulated in their inter-dependence through joint and extended household structures, an almost distinct division, by age, of roles and responsibilities lay with children. In an ideal Indian family situation, by the age of twelve children should complete their primary schooling and by the age of seventeen they should be done with their secondary schooling. Between 18 and 22 years they should be in a tertiary institution, seek employment thereafter and enter into
marriage between 26 and thirty years of age. However, these characterizations are reflections of an historical juncture and manifestations of a cultural ethic that is relevant, though not exclusively, to one group. The issue of when an offspring is a child, an adolescent, or of the youth, is not distinctively defined in social or cultural terms. Some insight into the definitional aspects of age categories and what follows will be of some benefit in viewing how the group under scrutiny matches its expectations with international writing about it.

**TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL CLARITY ABOUT “YOUTH”**

The last two decades have witnessed a proliferation of research and publications on children, adolescents and youth. One of the reasons for this growing interest lies with their marginalization by their governments and insensitivity towards their needs and roles in society. A widespread phenomenon in post-colonial Africa and Latin America has been to use children and youth in internecine military battles over power struggles and political office while in other highly populated countries such as India, Pakistan and China they provide a huge pool of cheap and unskilled labour. These situations often serve as catalysts for migration of children and youth – within and outside their countries – to areas that are perceived to provide more rewarding opportunities for employment and social mobility. The effect of this is an ongoing brain and labour-drain in countries that need this category of persons the most. Despite the proliferation of interest, there is still some turgidity with which definitions and understandings of children, adolescents and youth function. Such a situation is likely to persist for a longer period internationally because of the varying social and legal definitions that are attributed to these categories of people in different countries. However, despite the likelihood of such diversities, published material ought to define and contextualize each category for the sake of clarity.

One of the most prominent agencies of the International Union for Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) that is responsible for the study of youth viz. the Commission on Children, Childhood and Youth, published a series of papers in a book titled *Children and Youth in the Global Metropole* (Behera and Trawick, 2007). Their opening 15 page paper: “An introduction to the Ethnography of Children and Youth in Cities” dedicates just one but important 13 line paragraph on youth in the global context. Recognising the need to separate the category of children from youth, they observed: “Urban youth workers strongly advocated the view that ‘youth’ are not of the same category as ‘children’, and that the anthropology of youth was just as important, and just as in need of attention, as the anthropology of children. At the same time, the line between youth and childhood is fuzzy, and youth have in common with children that they often are not taken seriously, nor are they accorded the rights accorded to so-called ‘full adults’ (Behera and Trawick, 2007: 5). In a supportive paper in this publication, Mayer (2007), writing on “Vienna Youth: Growing up in a Multi-Ethnic City”, stated that she did interviews and informal talks with “hundreds of adolescents between the ages of twelve and twenty-four…This paper does not deal with children but with adolescents’ (Mayer, 2007: 106-107). This statement and the title of Mayer’s paper require scrutiny in order to produce some clarity about the concepts “youth” and “adolescents”.

It would be appropriate to begin with definitions that influence conceptualizations of people from different age groups. The Chambers-Macmillan South African Student’s Dictionary (1995: 1160) defines “youth” as “the early part of your life, especially the period between childhood and mature adulthood” – without providing an age group for this category. 1985 was marked by the United Nations General Assembly as International Youth Year, thereby setting the scene for a universal definition of “youth” as those falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, this category finds an overlap with the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, adopted on 20th November 1989 – which defines children as persons who are up to the age of 18 years. While this might appear as a contradiction, the United Nations explanation is that it is intentional because of the perceived protection it is likely to provide to as large a group as possible, especially since many countries tend to regard individuals as adults only after the age of eighteen (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm#1). The Chambers-Macmillan South African Student’s Dictionary (1995: 15) defines the word adolescent as “a young person between the ages of 13 and 16, who is passing
from childhood to adulthood”. While it provides an age category for adolescent it avoids doing so for the word “youth”. Both definitions do not use either concept as though they are interchangeable, leaving the reader with the distinct impression that the two words refer to distinct categories of people. Against the background of these definitions it is clear that Mayer uses the words “youth” and “adolescent” as synonymous, yet international institutions such as the United Nations and Chambers-Macmillan Dictionary make a clear distinction between the two. Mayer’s interchangeable use of “youth” and “adolescents” and the absence of an explanation for this adoption is blurring to efforts that attempt to ascertain a more accurate and universal meaning of the concept “youth”.

For the purposes of this paper the word youth is defined as anyone that falls within the 16 to 30 years age range since it is from this period that career choices are made, especially for the purposes of tertiary education, and thereafter, from 21 years onwards, choices about where to live and who to choose as a partner to cohabit with or to enter into marriage with. It is within this age range that most individuals make the most crucial decisions about work, relationships and marriage.

It is through children, adolescents and youth that beliefs, values and practices are transmitted to ensure reproduction of cultural systems and their sustainability. In ideal terms remaining in the geographical areas in which they are born serves as an effective way of ensuring sustainability. Closeness to extended kin, social and religious centres, and being part of a local system are intrinsic to the strands that make up their social fabric. Conservatism and control, either matriarchal or patriarchal, of the younger generations lends itself towards a close-knit situation that keeps children, adolescents and youth from migration, unless circumstances implores them to do so. Migration by any individual or group, either as families, friends or communities can be welcoming if it is not based on push factors that forcibly uproots people. But when it does, it is usually traumatic and upsetting to the cohesiveness that people feel by living as part of communities.

**INDIAN FAMILY VALUES AND CHANGE**

Historically, people from India preferred not to leave their country because of the impurities that they would face after crossing oceans, which they referred to as “kala pani” (black waters) (Jain, 1993: 4). Arising out of these beliefs is a visible closeness with which families and communities lived. Although it took almost fifty years since 1860 for indentured labourers to reconstitute a semblance of the “Indian family”, because of the bias in attracting male labour from India, much of this close-knit family sentiment reproduced itself in South Africa. Living in joint and extended families became normative to a point when anthropologist Hilda Kuper pointed out that “…in most situations it is misleading to generalize about ‘the Indians’”. However, in the next paragraph she added that: “Despite the diversity, there is one institution - the family – which has certain characteristics common to all sections of the Indian people so that one can speak, albeit with reservations, of the ‘Indian family’” (Kuper, 1956: 15).

Numerous other studies were undertaken since the 1960s to focus upon the joint and extended families among Indians in Durban. Jithoo’s fieldwork in the 1960s, culminating in two publications in 1970 and 1975 and followed by Butler-Adam and Venter (1984,1987); Schoombee and Mantzaris (1984, 1986,1987) and by Freund (1991) made these institutions among people of Indian origin the focus of attention in their research. While recognizing their widespread prevalence within this population group, one common factor appeared to cut across all of these publications i.e. the apparent shift away from joint and extended families towards nuclear family structures. My own research in 2006 and 2007 urged me to adopt a different perspective from these publications about the shift away from joint and extended families towards nuclear families. While this is not the appropriate space to enter into an extensive discussion on this issue, what is implicit in the notions of joint and extended families are the relative close-knit relationships and dependencies that characterize many Indian households. Joint and extended structures serve as institutions of social security and identity building, especially in the absence of adequate state measures to protect its citizens. By their very nature such relationships and dependencies make the family-cum-household an ideal setting for the transmission of values and familial...
obligations that they prefer their younger
generations to learn about.

Often roles and responsibilities among Indian
youth, particularly males, are understood in terms
of co-responsibilities, sharing and remaining
within their households. Conventional practices
over the last hundred years required that they
either drop off school at an acceptable age and
standard or they complete their tertiary education,
seek employment and begin contributing to
household needs. This often includes contribu-
tions towards running of the households,
meeting educational costs of the younger siblings
and sometimes immediate relatives, as well as
meeting costs of younger females’ members until
their marriages. A milestone is later reached
through their incumbent marriages, opening up
dynamics about how household property and
wealth, if there is anything to be shared among
siblings, may be distributed.

While this pattern still persists, there are
increasing tendencies towards reviewing roles
and responsibilities in the context of changes that
are taking place within post-apartheid South
Africa and the global economy. Reviewing
positions about conventional proclivities must
be seen against the background of the most
influential factors that urge people to recast their
values and expectations in a rapidly changing
world. For most of the twentieth century, up to
the mid-1990s when political control of the
country was entrenched in White hegemony, a
bitter-sweet relationship prevailed through the
concomitant abhorrence for apartheid against an
equal sense of appreciation for White leadership.
The relative safety that people of Indian origin
felt during this era impacted upon how Indian
families positioned themselves against the relative
depravities and possibilities for educational and
economic enhancement. In the 1950s and 1960s
when Britain’s doors were open to all members of
its ex-colonies to relocate to it, the decision to
emigrate was not wide and extensive. The Indian
families that chose to emigrate found themselves
in a position that forced them to identify with
South Africa as their country of birth, but with
India as well, to the extent that they could only
remotely identify with it through ancestral ties.
Despite the harshness of apartheid the strength
of the South African economy was visible through
the creation of wealth that White minority rule
generated. The global economic boom and South
Africa’s equal rise in prominence during the 1960s
as an economic force in the African continent
prompted Indians to remain.

These sentiments filtered into the early period
of post-apartheid South Africa when the first
democratic general election that was held on 27
April 1994, brought people of all classified groups
to stand together in de-racialised lines to cast
their votes for political parties of their choice.
However, the euphoria that accompanied this
period met an early demise as the rapid rise in
criminality throughout the country produced a
situation of death and destruction that is often
matched with countries that are engaged in civil
war. South Africa’s murder rate is second only to
Columbia, if independent sources are considered
more reliable than official sources. The Christian
Action group claims that the official statistics for
the murder rate in South Africa is underreported
by about 60 to 70 per cent. For instance, while the
police crime statistics revealed a number of 21683
murders for the year 2000, the Medical Research
Council claimed that the number was 32482.
Interpol on the other hand claimed that South
Africa’s murder rate was 54298. If Interpol’s figures
are accepted then the murder rate in South Africa
has for the first eight years averaged 47882 per
annum – as opposed to an average of 7036 murders
per year for forty four years from 1950 to 1993 –
when the country was under apartheid rule.

An indication of this perennial fear in South
Africa is especially visible through the extreme
security measures that residents are now taking
– through high fences topped with metal spikes,
higher reliance on armed response from private
security firms than on the police, breeding and
training of dogs for domestic security, increase
in gun ownership and a tendency to buy into
enclosed high walled housing estates. Such
paranoia about security is also seen in the
virtually deserted streets soon after sunset,
closure of local stores about the same time and
an increasing aversion in going out at night unless
it is in groups and driving in cars that are locked
with closed windows.

Against the background of these realities,
Indian families, like White and Coloured families,
are increasingly reviewing their options –
especially what might exist for their future
generations in the years ahead.

FIELDWORK

As part of a research project on household
structures, questions extended to career options and preferences that interviewees had. This part of the interview was based on eight questions - of which the first five was to ascertain the distances extended families lived from each other, how interviewees’ career choices were influenced by them (including their parents) and household income. The questions were predicated on the assumption that the closer the interviewees were to their extended families the greater the possibilities of such members influencing the career choices and destinations of the youth. This assumption is derived from knowledge about two things. Firstly, Indian families in South Africa are known to be patriarchal and generally extended – which serves to influence choices made by their younger generations about education and employment. Secondly, that educational achievements and traveling to work overseas are not uniform accomplishments and aspirations across Indian families in South Africa. Only segments of extended families tend to demonstrate these characteristics which in turn position them as being more influential among the wider kin network. Aloofness is also a characteristic that tends to manifest, in which case it has a tendency to separate and isolate extended family members.

Two sets of fieldwork were carried out over a ten month period in 2006 and 2007. The first set of 150 interviews was done in three different Indian dominated residential areas in Durban between November 2006 and January 2007. The second set of interviews was done from May to July 2007 with students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In the first set of 150 interviews the issues covered included household structure and change as well as family values and change. In this exercise the aim was to interview any available person from the age of 16 years at the houses that were visited. The age range was from 16 years to 73 years and included both males and females. Sixty-two of the 150 interviewees fell within the age range of 16 to 26 years. A noticeable factor was that people beyond the United Nations classification of youth i.e. 26 years, both married and unmarried, also demonstrated an eagerness to seek employment outside the country. In all three residential areas the level of interest by people who expressed a yes answer varied by a small margin of barely 20 per cent. While in some cases people stated their disinterest in emigrating, among others the numbers were equally high if not more. Only 20 per cent of the total group of 150 stated that they were uncertain about wanting to find employment outside the country, leaving the possibilities and future decisions for this group wide open. Against this background the number that would want to work overseas exceeds the number that expressed a sense of satisfaction with their situations.

Among the group that this research has classified as youth i.e. between the ages of 16 and 26 years, the responses that showed a positive desire to want to leave South Africa for employment overseas was significant. Among the eight questions that formed part of the research on career options and preferences, the crucial question was: “Would you like to work overseas or are you thinking of doing so?” While the question was put to all of the 150 respondents it is only the information from those that fell between the ages of 16 and 26 that was analysed for this paper. Their range of occupations varied from school going youth to semi-skilled workers and professionals with tertiary education diplomas and degrees. There was no inhibition about whether males and females should be interviewed, as is indicated in the table 1. The table 1 records only those among the youth who stated an outright determination to want to leave the country to seek employment. From the 150 interviews in the three residential areas where interviews were done the total number of youth that were interviewed were 62. From this number nineteen of the interviewees that are not reflected in this table were either against finding employment overseas or were undecided about it. Among them there was a generally positive sentiment about the future of remaining in South Africa despite the common perspective about the high levels of violence that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential area</th>
<th>Age-groups</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clare Estate &amp; Reservoir Hills</td>
<td>16-26 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallcross</td>
<td>16-26 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verulam</td>
<td>16-26 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
they shared with others who, because of it, expressed a desire to leave. But their reasons for wanting to remain behind varied. In four cases in Verulam, those youth that expressed a desire not to leave felt that re-adapting to a new environment was too precious to separate from. A seventeen year old male who, employed as a salesperson and was doing part-time study said: “I am comfortable in South Africa. All I know is South Africa. It would be difficult to adapt in a new environment.” Another married twenty-five old administration clerk, retorted: “No. My immediate family is here – so this is where my home is. I will also find it difficult to adapt to a new environment”. In the case of a recently divorced twenty-five year old computer engineer, he echoed similar words to the prior case: “No. My immediately family is here. I do not want to live away from them – because they are all I have after my marriage failed”. A seventeen year old Grade 12 male student spoke confidently and in a somewhat idealistic way about why he will not seek work overseas: “No. There are certain family commitments that I have to honour and would not neglect my responsibilities.”

41 (66%) of the 62 stated their intention to seek employment overseas. Twenty-five of this number was girls/young women over the age of 18 years while 16 were school going and university youth or young working men. Among the latter group, the responses varied from wanting to fulfill personal dreams about where they could travel and live independently towards greater independence in their levels of education, choices of careers and the extent to which they shared with others who, because of it, expressed a desire to leave. But their reasons for wanting to remain behind varied. In four cases in Verulam, those youth that expressed a desire not to leave felt that re-adapting to a new environment was too precious to separate from. A seventeen year old male who, employed as a salesperson and was doing part-time study said: “I am comfortable in South Africa. All I know is South Africa. It would be difficult to adapt in a new environment.” Another married twenty-five old administration clerk, retorted: “No. My immediate family is here – so this is where my home is. I will also find it difficult to adapt to a new environment”. In the case of a recently divorced twenty-five year old computer engineer, he echoed similar words to the prior case: “No. My immediately family is here. I do not want to live away from them – because they are all I have after my marriage failed”. A seventeen year old Grade 12 male student spoke confidently and in a somewhat idealistic way about why he will not seek work overseas: “No. There are certain family commitments that I have to honour and would not neglect my responsibilities.”

Women who are part of the category of youth spoke similarly to the young men who showed a preference to work overseas. They expressed an equal level of anxiety about the perceived lack of career opportunities in South Africa as opposed to other developed countries. In some of the cases, where no previous travel experience was stated, an almost romanticized position prevailed about the possibilities and opportunities that exist for them. While the countries of choice were not always specified, anything “overseas” appeared to represent something better than what South Africa could offer. A 23 year-old unmarried microbiologist said: “Yes. Definitely. There are hardly any employment opportunities here in South Africa, so I would love to explore some overseas”. A single 26 year-old accountant responded: “Yes, I am seriously considering working overseas as the career opportunities are far better overseas”, while a 20 year old third year student of psychology replied: “I am seriously considering emigrating to Australia to build a career for myself.” In two other instances with a twenty-one year-old salesperson and 25 year-old accountant, both unmarried, their decisions were more directly based on the issue of crime, respectively; “Yes, definitely. The money is better overseas and I would be relieved to get away from the crime”; “Yes. Were victims of a hijacking very recently, and this has led us to seriously consider moving overseas. The crime levels in South Africa are just unbearable.”

The fact that more young women remain unmarried, place emphasis on career building and express a desire to want to leave the country to work is an expression of an important development in a community that is renowned for its patriarchal and restrictive control, especially over women. These responses demonstrate the extent to which a significant social shift has been made away from inhibiting practices that mainly restricted Indian women to domestic roles and responsibilities. Indian women sense the relative freedom that they now have when compared to social practices of their recent history – up to at least the mid-1970s, a period in which there has been increased enrolments in secondary and tertiary education. While a measure of conservatism still prevails with respect to the movements of and control over young women the move away from traditionalism represents a degree of emancipation that is increasingly showing signs of veering towards greater independence in their levels of education, choices of careers and the extent to which they could travel and live independently far away from home.
As a way of corroborating the evidence above a shorter questionnaire with more specific questions was carried out with 100 female students who were 26 years and below at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The question about whether potential graduates have intentions to migrate was structured to ascertain one of three levels from them viz. high, low or none. They also needed to identify their field of study and state their country of preference. This was a captive group that was within relatively easy reach, making them a congenial target group to access. The information that was elicited from them is presented in tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2: Graduate Survey – Indian female final-year students – UKZN, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration</th>
<th>Potential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>58 (to work overseas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (Uncertain)</td>
<td>9 (to study overseas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No Migration Potential)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 3: Academic fields covered by survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic fields</th>
<th>No. of females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Destination of choice of final-year student sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>No. of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utd Arab Emirates</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain Total:</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The inclination to migrate among the hundred students that were interviewed demonstrated a strong resonance with the information that was gathered in the residential areas. In both samples at least 66 per cent of the interviewees stated an inclination to migrate. Their reasons for wanting to leave the country were equally consistent with the first group of interviewees i.e. with perceived lack of work opportunities and crime in the country being of prime importance. The countries that featured most prominently among the students choices were equally consistent, with the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK being countries of choice where English is the medium of communication. Although many began talking about moving away from the family with ambivalence, conversations often veered towards a revaluation of how their moves away to other countries can be more productive than counter-productive. One respondent argued: “I realize that my parents will not want to move with because everything that they worked for and everybody that they know are here. But they also realize that for future generations having someone live overseas will be of great help if any other family member might want to move. When we come to South Africa we will have a home and when they come to visit me wherever I am they will have a home.” Another respondent spoke in similar terms, although he did not have any intention of relocating because of his aging and unwell mother: “My sister left for America in 1979. When she leaves Texas to come to South Africa she always say that she is coming home. When she gets tired of Durban she says wants to go back home. The last time she came she couldn’t take it anymore – because the security that we now have to take in our homes has become just too much for her to bear. She just couldn’t take having to lock the security gate the whole day and be careful when she is walking outside in the yard even during the day. Every house in this road has been broken into and nobody has been caught. That’s why we are saying to our nephews and nieces – ‘Get good jobs and qualifications and get out from here!...There is no future for them here’.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research for this paper was to ascertain the extent to which Indian youth in Durban between the ages of 16 and 26 years are showing a preference for employment overseas. Those who preferred to remain in South Africa were demonstrating issues that are entrenched in an age old value laden philosophy about which people of Indian origin still tend to romanticize. Intrinsic to this is their place in their
homes and the responsibilities that they feel towards their families. Their commitment to this aspect of their lives underscored the values that determined their career choices and the will to remain steadfast in familial roles and responsibilities. Remaining as part of the structure or as close to them as possible, which are characteristic of joint and extended Indian families, are ways in which close-knit bonds are demonstrated. What is also shown in this position is the relative disinterest about the violence that is reported to be so prevalent in South Africa. Despite this, these interviewees displayed a level of confidence in the future of the country that their counterparts felt disinclined to express.

While none of the interviewees who expressed a desire to work overseas have left their homes to do so at the time of the interviews, the inclination to migrate was greater than the inclination not to. When 66 percent of an educated affluent or potentially affluent segment of a youthful population express a desire to migrate, then willful inclinations must be examined against the push factors that are likely to exist. In the situation in South Africa, the research that was carried out by the Christian group of researchers seriously undermines and discredits official statistics about the various levels of serious crime that is afflicting the country’s image not only abroad but also with its own citizens. A number of the youth that stated their inclination to want to migrate cited two things that were pertinent to themselves in this. They were the extra-ordinarily high levels of violence in the country and their perceived lack of opportunities for their careers. Several of the interviewees were victims of violence themselves, prompting them to act decisively by proceeding with applications to emigrate. Stories and media reports about the horrendous nature of attacks against innocent citizens has forced such victims to try and escape the possibility of become such a statistic. The possibility that worse could have happened to them or that it could recur exacerbated the threats that they felt about their personal and family’s safety. Even though some of them were graduates who were employed, they still felt that they were not getting the best opportunities to develop to their fullest potential.

Part of the problem was the restrictive policy of affirmative action – that is perceived to be laden against Indian youth and operating in favour of Africans in general. The notion that equity policies will favour Africans first before everyone else has also extended itself to the emergent graduates from our university. Such negativity must be taken more seriously if South Africa’s brain drain is to be reduced, if not halted.

REFERENCES


KEYWORDS Indian youth; extended families; joint families; Durban; South Africa; transnationalism

ABSTRACT Research for this paper began as a response to two issues viz. the publication of a text in 2007 by members of the Commission for Children, Childhood and Youth (International Union for Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) and a joint call for papers by the International Sociology Association’s Research Committee on Sociology of Youth (RC 34) and the Research Committee on Sociology of Children (RC 53). At least 250 interviews were done over a two year period in residential areas and in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The data gleaned from these research exercises was intended to acquire a glimpse into what people thought about Indian youth acquiring employment overseas, to which countries they preferred going, their reasons for wanting to leave, and the impact this is having on the conventional norms associated with joint and extended family patterns. Evidence here suggests two things viz. that Indian youth in Durban are still ambiguous about totally severing their ties with South Africa and are therefore creating the basis for the entrenchment of transnational families; and that their decisions to emigrate are intrinsically linked to attachments to their families and concern about the prevalence of violence in the country.
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