CANADIAN-BORN SIKH DAUGHTERS: EXPERIENCING LIFE THROUGH A MIXTURE OF CULTURAL INFLUENCES

by

Inderpal Kaur Sandhu

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Abstract

Canadian ideas about individualism and equality between genders can be stressful for immigrants and their children. This study took a conceptual view of eight Canadian-born Sikh daughters of Punjabi immigrant parents living in Prince George with particular emphasis on how the mixture of cultural influences affected their behavioural patterns and well-being. The purpose of this study was to reveal the lived experiences of these first-generation women, shedding light related to topics of familial, social, and cultural expectations.

In 2008, a qualitative approach was utilized to explore the attitudes of these eight Sikh women. Using a phenomenological paradigm, this study aimed to discover, understand, and describe these women's lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Although there is no one story, there were similarities amongst the women. Themes of external influences, psychological factors, emotional effects, and positive attitudes and beliefs emerged.

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Acknowledgments

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With deep respect, I thank my parents, Joga and Rupinder, for emphasizing the importance of education throughout my life. Mom, thank you for being insistent that I "go study". This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

Finally, I am blessed to have my brothers, Gary and Justin, whose faith in me has enabled me to face challenges in life with more confidence and self-assurance. Let us celebrate!

Dedication

To my brother Gary

Through the many challenges in your life you remain strong, genuine, and faithful. You are truly my inspiration.

ਜੋ ਮਾਗਹਿ
ਠਾਕੁਰ ਅਪੁਨੇ
ਤੇ ਜੋਈ ਸੋਈ
ਦੇਵੈ ।
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib 681)

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research explores and describes the unique experiences of Canadian-born Sikh daughters of Punjabi immigrant parents living in Prince George, British Columbia. It was in the interest of discovering how these women make a life through an inevitable mixture of very different cultures that this research took place. I consider the specific and general cultural variables that affect the behaviour of these first-generation women whose parents were born in India but have settled in Canada. This study aims to take a conceptual view of their experience with particular emphasis on how the mixture of cultural influences affect their behavioural patterns and well-being. How do they respond to different contexts and situations? Does their experience reflect an ease of switching from one culture to another or do these women highlight stresses and strains faced on a day-to-day basis?

No specific hypotheses were developed. Research suggests that immigrant women maintain a traditional position with respect to marriage and family roles, and that the first generation appear to be questioning the relevance of traditional values in their lives (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). My own research began based on these Sikh women's experience of their own particular meanings. My research questions were: How do first-generation Sikh women experience life, having been raised in the individualistic orientation of Canadian culture and exposed to the North American women's liberation movement? Which values of the Eastern and Western cultures have the first-generation incorporated and how are they resolving the differences?

While there are issues and challenges that all Canadians of South Asian origin face in common (e.g., racism, cultural conflict) there are significant variations depending on the specific group (Patel et al., 1996). While immigrant parents insist that children follow

cultural norms by prioritizing their time around school and family obligations, the message from Western society is for these women to search for their own independence and personal happiness. These opposing messages subsequently creates a dual burden for the Sikh women who attempt to balance these conflicting values. As people move from one country to another and re-settle, ethnicity is being re-created, re-defined, and re-invented over time.

Rationale

"It is like living two lives right. At home I'm one person and the second I leave I turn into a brown little white girl" (Serena, personal interview, 2008).

What is it that makes the stories of first-generation Sikh Canadian women worthy of telling? Their stories are (re)memories and (re)constructions of complex realities that sometimes appear fictional but are stifled and suppressed voices speaking truths about acceptance, tolerance, exception, and resistance. In essence, the purpose of this study is to reveal the experiences of Canadian-born Sikh daughters of immigrant parents living in Prince George to shed light related to topics of familial, social, and cultural expectations. This study does not attempt to speak for or represent all, or even most, first-generation Sikh Canadian-born female voices. Stories shared in this research are spoken from positioned perspectives, at precise moments, and as contextual expressions.

It was my hope that this study amply the voices of Sikh women and to contribute to research about this growing population. How do these participants experience their everyday life as female, as a child of immigrant parents, as a Sikh, as a Canadian?

This study aspires to provide the social work discipline and its service providers with heightened knowledge about the real life experiences of these first-generation Sikh women. As these women validate what is important to them and what they struggle with, service delivery should then be based on their own unique values and beliefs. As a social worker, it

is vital to provide support or intervention in an intrinsic manner that fits the needs of the individual and their community.

Economics and political currents in these locales further emphasize the contextuality of Canadian identity. It would be presumptuous to assume homogeneity amongst Sikh women within the same country or community. The experiences, events, and stories of individuals living in cities with large Sikh populations are likely to be different than those living in communities where they are one of few Sikh families (Sharma, 2003).

This study also hopes to fill a gap in qualitative studies on Canadian-born Sikh women in northern Canada. It has been shown that the particular context of small cities is paramount in understanding immigrant experience and settlement there (Hyndman & Schuurman, 2004; Krahn et al., 2003; Ralston, 1996; Walton-Roberts, 2005). Although the aforementioned studies have focused on small cities, none have looked at a northern city. This study has found that the northern context is indeed important. As immigration continues, understanding the experiences of these individuals will become more imperative.

The focus on Canadian-born Sikh women allows for greater coherence when undertaking research and analyzing results, than if a broader ethnic range was explored. When referring to participants of this study, a fixed term, "Canadian-born Sikh" was used to inform the reader in a way that is concise, reasonably precise, and as neutral as possible – that the women are of Sikh background, are children of Indian immigrants, and have Canadian nationality. They are women who are negotiating discrepant elements of the Punjabi ethnic sociocultural script, Sikh religious script, and the dominant culture script.

Researcher's Position

I am a Canadian-born Sikh woman of Punjabi immigrant parents. I have my own personal identity made through lived experience which makes me an "insider" to knowledge received. Though being an insider gives me an understanding which is not accessible to those outside the culture, I must be cognizant of not assuming too much based on that position. I am not assuming that knowledge based on my personal experience is generalizable and common to others in this culture or group.

Terms

Sikh – This study focuses on the Sikhs. Their homeland is the province of Punjab in northern India, where the native language is Punjabi (Ames & Inglis, 1976). In light of literature constraints and within the community a number of the terms that describe South Asian females are used interchangeably, particularly South Asian, Indian, East Indian, Punjabi, and Indo-Canadian. While this thesis places a particular emphasis on Punjabi Sikh women and their experiences within the Canadian context, realizes that these are women generally categorized by society. If otherwise not specified by the literature, the term Sikh will be used to identify the participants in this research. All women were affiliated with the Sikh religion, either as participating Sikhs, having Sikh identity, or acknowledging Sikhism as part of their cultural heritage.

Immigrant – For this study, immigrant is defined as an individual who was born in India and has settled in Canada permanently.

First generation – This term refers to those individuals "belonging to the first generation of a family to be born in a particular country" (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). The

women who participated in this research were born in Canada to parents who emigrated from Punjab, India.

Culture – Is a set of ideas, values, beliefs, rules, and standards shared by members of a group (Assanand, et al., 1990). These mental and social constructs are best observed as individual. Cultures are not static entities and change according to negotiations between individuals and the communities (Assanand, et al., 1990). In other words, as individuals encounter themselves in different situations their needs are balanced with the needs of the groups as a whole.

North – According to Coates and Morrison, Canada has two 'Norths' (as cited in Delaney, 1995). The first north is the vast region contained in Canada's three territories, the Northwest Territory, the Yukon Territory, and Nunavut Territory. The second north consists of the provincial norths in all but the Maritime Provinces. The northern area of these provinces consists of 61.6 percent of the total area of the provinces. As well, these provincial norths have similar histories which include "the control exerted by outsiders, the impoverishment of the indigenous population, the emphasis on rapid, profit-oriented development, and the inability of local residents to control their destiny" (Delaney, 1995).

The population in the southern portion of Canadian provinces is much greater than northern areas. Non-urban areas share common attributes, common geographical and spatial similarities, and common social histories and cultures (Delaney, 1995). The issue is not that human beings are different but rather that human beings in similar ecological environments tend to develop similar coping and response skills in relation to environmental pressure. People in northern/rural communities often know each other very well and have shared

histories (Delaney, 1995). This specific study takes place within the context of small-town curiosity and seemingly unavoidable familiarity.

Prince George – The city of Prince George is located at the heart of British Columbia's Central Interior. It has adopted the civic motto: "B.C.s Northern Capital" (Halseth & Halseth, 1998). For immigrants who settled in the city, Prince George was often not their original destination. Many men (with their families) first arrived in larger metropolitan centres where they heard about the work opportunities available in northern resource towns such as Prince George. Once primary breadwinner immigrants were settled in Prince George, others followed to be closer to family members. Immigrants who were already established often sponsored family members to come to Canada.

This study will begin to better understand the possibility and complexity of an authentic first-generation Sikh Canadian daughters' identity – an identity that is not so easily spoken as it is negotiated in the midst of multiple worlds of languages, geographies, traditions, cultures, and gendered expectations. The next chapter will provide context to the research being studied.

Chapter 2: Context for the Research

Prior to reviewing the existing literature surrounding experiences of the first generation and immigrant families in North America, it is important to discuss specific contextual factors for this research. This chapter will highlight and define Sikhism, speak to immigration, explore the differences for the first generation, and discuss the concept of situational ethnicity.

Sikhism

"I have to keep a double wardrobe" (Vaani, personal interview, 2008).

While Sikhs comprise approximately two percent of India's population, they are highly visible for their work ethic and courageousness, which stems from their religion (Singh, 2004). The Sikh religion arose in the fifteenth century in the Punjab area of India where the dominant religions were Islam and Hinduism. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-1539), was born outside Lahore (now in Pakistan) (Singh, 2004). The Sikh religion originated in particular social, economic, and political conditions. Guru Nanak spoke against religious intolerance, caste prejudices, religious rituals, oppression, and inequality between men and women.

The word Sikh comes from the Sanskrit phrase 'punjabi sic,' meaning disciple (Minhas, 1994) and derived from the Punjabi verb meaning "to learn". According to Singh (2004), the fundamental principle of Sikhism is "There is only One Being and Truth is its Name" or "*Ikk oan kar sat nam*". Sikhs, however, do not believe there is either a higher Being on a throne or a divine person on Earth (Singh, 2004). Singh (2004) further has observed that: the Sikh Ultimate Reality is without physical form. It cannot be seen or represented visually in a picture or a statue. It transcends all space, time, and gender. It takes

in all beliefs. Thus the Sikh ideal includes all religions, races, and cultural backgrounds (Singh, 2004).

A Sikh is understood to be a person who believes in One God or Ultimate Being, who is a part of all creation but transcendent of it, and who also follows the teachings of the Ten Gurus (Guru Nanak and his nine recognized successors), which are a part of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, or the Sikh holy book (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Sikhs were no longer to turn to a man and the *Guru Granth Sahib* was to take the place of the living Gurus (Singh, 2004). The *Guru Granth Sahib* is comprised of a collection of poems, songs, and hymns (mostly set to musical tone), which took up to 180 years to complete (Mann, 2004). Currently, Sikh ceremonies relating to birth, initiation, marriage, and death take place in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* (Mann, 2004).

To a Sikh, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is the Eternal Guru, which is why it holds such a special place in the *gurudwara* (Sikh Temple) or, literally, "gateway to the Guru". *Gurudwaras* serve as arenas of religious worship, social gathering, cultural and religious education. Sikhism has no priests in the classic sense of the term. The *granthis*, or scripture-readers, conduct the worship services. Caretakers and management committees administer the building and the congregation but the social structure of the *gurudwara* is deliberately egalitarian in nature. Anyone may get up and speak or read from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, sing hymns, and play religious music, or speak on any topic (Mahmood & Brady, 2000).

According to Singh, there are three basic elements of Sikhism: *seva*, *langar*, and *sangat* (Singh, 2004). Moreover, furthering the values of equality, fellowship, humility, and "familyhood," are critical elements in Sikhism (Singh, 2004). *Seva* refers to selfless service of others both in the Sikh community and outside the community. Young and old, rich and

poor can get involved in various tasks that range from serving food in the congregation to helping to build hospitals, schools, and charity homes (Singh, 2004). Furthermore, Singh (2004) has argued that Sikhs believe *seva* cultivates humility, allows egos to be overcome, and purifies both body and mind.

Langar refers to the community meal and the kitchen in which food is prepared (Singh,

2004). In *langar*, everyone prepares and eats the food together (Singh, 2004). To demonstrate equality, everyone, regardless of race, class, or gender, sits on the floor beside one another (Singh, 2004). During Guru Nanak's time, congregating and sharing a meal together, regardless of gender or caste, was considered revolutionary (Singh, 2004). Individuals who do not practice the Sikh faith are also welcome to enjoy the many meals that are prepared for *langar*. It is a fundamental part of Sikhism, testifying to the importance for Sikhs of social equality and the familyhood of all people.

The third element of Sikhism is *sangat*, which refers to the Sikh gathering, or local community (Singh, 2004). According to Singh, the closeness associated with congregating and listening to readings from the *Guru Granth Sahib* represents a force for inspiring the spiritual quest (Singh, 2004).

Religiously, there are many types of Sikhs, each with their own nuanced beliefs. The main divisions are based on the degree of observance practiced. The *Kesadharis* are those Sikhs with long hair but who are not initiated or do not follow all the requirements of *Amrit* (baptism). The 5Ks, along with the turban for men, are the symbols to be worn by an *Amritdhari* or *Khalsa* Sikh. They are: *kes* (uncut hair), signifying a simple life, saintliness, and devotion to God; *kangha* (wooden comb), representing mental and bodily cleanliness;

kirpan (knife), representing freedom and the power of God; *kara* (steel bracelet), signifying the eternity of God and as a reminder to not misuse the hands; and *kachha* (short breeches), reminding Sikhs to observe fidelity and sexual morality. The symbols are related to each other through the juxtaposition of power and virility with discipline and restraint (Joy, 1984). Taken together they constitute a balanced whole.

The *Sahajdharis* are Sikhs who only observe some of the teachings and requirements (Mann, 2004; Takhar, 2005). On the ground, these differences usually translate into a division between *Khalsa* and non-*Khalsa* Sikhs, often denoted by their observance of the 5Ks. It is often difficult to separate the religious and cultural components of beliefs held by particular ethnic groups. The components of ethnic identity may vary across groups but frequently include language, religious practices, friendships, dating, and marriage patterns (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). The ethnicity of Sikhs is tightly tied to both cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

Traditionally, Sikhs have been recognizable due to outward symbols that typify their physical appearance. Yet in contemporary Canadian society, many Sikh females grow up without these traditional symbols, and thus experience society in a similar manner as other South Asians. When people see a Sikh without symbols, they tend to see a 'South Asian' as has been socially constructed in our society. However, it is important to recognize that there are distinctions within South Asian cultures, particularly with respect to the role of religion, languages spoken, and customs practiced in today's families.

There is also a discussion over the degree to which Sikhism is tied to ethnicity. The large majority of Sikhs have Punjabi ancestry. While some scholars view the Sikhs who have been baptized into the *Khalsa* in this way as "fundamentalists," from the viewpoint of *Khalsa*

Sikhs themselves they are simply being "true Sikhs" (*gursikh*) (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Many Sikhs believe that if they are born into Sikh families, it automatically made them "a Sikh."

Women in Sikhism

"...I have my Canadian morals and trying to mesh the two together is asking for conflict in one way or another" (Payal, personal interview, 2008).

Sikhism recognizes unequivocal equality for all human beings and specifically for both men and women. Among equality of all human beings, fundamental aspects of Sikh theology include implicit gender equality and independence for women. The spiritual beliefs of Sikhism propose social reform of women's roles in society. Sikhism advocates active and equal participation in congregation, academics, healthcare, military among other aspects of society (Mahmood & Brady, 2000).

A unique aspect of the social status of women in Sikhi is that women did not have to fight for it. The Guru's enlightened ideals and efforts offered equal status some 500 years before most women could even dare to talk about or ask for equality. As suggested in the *Gurbani*, without women, there would be no one at all; they are the source of the physical existence of humanity (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Thus, *Gurbani* explicitly acknowledges their empowerment, dignity, and strength. In Sikh thought, a woman is an equal partner to a man in the spiritual advancement of all humanity. *Gurbani* frequently refers to the individual soul as feminine (Mahmood & Brady, 2000).

To the credit of Guru Nanak and the successive Gurus, the position and dignity of Indian women, which they had lost over the centuries, was restored and those who described a woman inferior to a man were condemned. Guru Nanak provided an empathic statement in *Asa Di Var* (a long composition): "It is from woman, the condemned one, that we are

conceived and it is from her that we are born...Then why denounce her from whom even kings and great men are born?" (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Guru Nanak consistently praised women, denounced their oppression, and strongly rejected suggestions made by his followers that women were evil or unworthy. He refused to make additions to the holy book of the Sikhs, the *Adi Granth*, that would have reviled women (Singh, 1994).

Reading *Gurbani* it can easily be seen that the Guru condemns practices and restrictions that keep women in a position of inferiority. There are several references that condemned cultural practices, such as sati and dowry requirements, that belittle women and consider them as an inferior gender. Guru Nanak spoke about women with immense respect and as history is a witness, his own sister Bebe Nanaki was the first woman to accept the religious doctrine propounded by them (Singh, 1994). A woman was the first one to accept the Sikh religion.

Gurus' mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters were active participants in the Sikh movement. For example, Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh were very young when they assumed Guruship after the execution of their respective fathers by the Muslim rulers, while Guru Har Krishan was a mere child of five when he took over as Guru after the death of his father (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Their mothers Mata Ganga, Mata Gujri and Mata Krishan Kaur were major influences on these Gurus at a very critical period in Sikh history as the Sikh movement was under attack not only from the Muslim rulers, but more so from other dangerous foes, the schismatic groups and the defenders of the caste ideology (Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Furthermore, it was Mata Sundri (Jito), wife of Guru Gobind Singh, who guided the Sikh community through a very difficult period of external repression and internal divisions after her husband's death (1708-1747 C.E.), longer than any of the nine

Gurus subsequent to Guru Nanak. Forward-thinking Guru Amar Das' daughter, Bibi Bhani, was the one who selected a groom for herself, Guru Ram Das. She was very active in the affairs of the community during her father's and her husband's Guruships (Mahmood & Brady, 2000).

Still, Sikh institutional leadership has traditionally been patriarchal in nature, despite the religion's commitment to equality. The majority of Guru Nanak's words fell on deaf ears and his ideas were interpreted quite differently (Singh, 1994). Many of the feminine symbols that Guru Nanak incorporated into scriptures were actually reversed to male symbols in the exegesis of Sikhism. The feminine principles that highlighted Guru Nanak's teachings were overlooked, neglected, and glossed over by Sikh and non-Sikh academics (Singh, 1994). The low status of women and their limited possibility of being granted their rightful place within the Sikh religion and Indian culture has typically remained, despite Guru Nanak's efforts (Singh, 1994).

Personal responsibility cannot exist without liberty, and liberty will not persist without responsibility. Today, it appears as though most Sikh women hesitate to participate in the foreground. For example, in local *Gurudwaras*, they have the right to perform all spiritual duties, but few women manage *gurudwara* affairs, take the *hukam* (command), organize events, give sermons, or, as *Panj Pyares* (five beloved ones), lead a *Nagar Kirtan* (parade). The Sikh community definitely looks like a male-dominated religion and society.

It is important to acknowledge that there may be certain groups of Sikhs that have renegotiated or bent these particular codes of the culture. The literature states that families living in urban centers may be less rigid in their expression of the Sikh religion in terms of the secondary position of women than families coming from a strictly rural background

(Basran & Bolaria, 2003; Mani, 1993). Whereas rural habitants see very little of the Western culture in their everyday lives, urban residents are exposed to greater degrees of Western influence on values and behavior. Time also can be considered a factor in this 'changing of the rules'. For instance, rules pertaining to the second-class treatment of women may be re-negotiated by second-generation East Indian women as a result of their education or exposure to other cultures (Das & Kemp, 1997).

Immigration

It is not easy to precisely determine when the first Sikhs settled in Canada due to inaccurate census keeping by Canadian officials. In those early enumerations, every migrant from India was labelled as a Hindu or East Indian. Nearly all the early settlers were Sikhs from the Indian state of Punjab and were retired soldiers of the British Indian Army (Helweg, 1986). Most of these Sikhs worked in the Canadian Pacific Railway or in the forest industry on Vancouver Island and in the Greater Vancouver area (Assanand et al., 1990). A few of the earlier settlers were educated and skilled. Most of them were separated at a young age from their families with their primary objective, to earn a livelihood and send savings to support families in Punjab (Singh, 2004).

Beginning in 1907, immigration of Asians became more and more restricted through racist policies. Indians were disenfranchised and would not regain the right to vote until 1947 (Johnston, 1984). In 1908, two immigration orders were passed by the Canadian government: that immigrants from India have at least $200 in their possession when they landed, and that they had to arrive through a 'continuous journey' from their country of citizenship, making it virtually impossible for Indians to immigrate (Buchignani & Indra, 1985). Between 1909 and 1919 the dominant society sought to extinguish the East Indian presence in Canada by eliminating the possibility of its self-perpetuation, banning the immigration of wives and

children of Indian residents in Canada (Li, 1990). The B.C. government attempted to further isolate the Indians who were already residents by barring them from political, economic, and social participation (Buchignani, 1980).

The Sikh population was active in challenging the discrimination they encountered in Canada. In 1906 the Sikhs founded the Khalsa Diwan Society, and in 1908 they built the first *gurudwara* in Vancouver. The *gurudwara* served as a centre for religious, political, and social activities for the Sikhs as well as the rest of the South Asian population (Nayar, 2004).

By 1919, the government was under enough pressure from Indians and citizens in Canada, as well as the government and people in Britain and India, that it allowed resident men to send for their wives and minor children. However, by this time most men had either returned to India or moved to California (Buchignani, 1980; Raj, 1980; Ralston, 1996). By 1925, there were fewer than a thousand Indians in Canada (Sampat-Mehta, 1984). Nevertheless, the first Sikh-Canadian was born in Vancouver in 1912, beginning the first Indian-Canadian family (Minhas, 1994).

In 1947, India gained its independence from Britain and was subsequently partitioned into India and Pakistan, with the border cutting directly through the province of Punjab. The Indians in Canada regained their right to vote in this year, along with their other political and legal rights, in part as a result of local Indian and political pressure (Buchignani, 1980). In 1967, the points system was implemented by the Canadian government, as a way to eliminate the overtly racist immigration policies of the past. The impact this had on Indian immigration can be discerned from the tenfold increase in numbers between 1961 and 1971 from 6774 to 68,000 (Chandrasekhar, 1985). In B.C. between 1996 and 2000, 81 percent of Indian immigrants were admitted under the family class (BC Stats, 2001). Up until 1960, the large

majority of Indian immigrants were family members of those already in Canada (O'Connell, 2000).

In addition to the changes in the racial make-up of the population, religious affiliations have shifted away from the mainstream. While there continues to be a high affiliation with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, the 2001 census revealed marked increases in followers of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism as a result of immigration trends (Statistics Canada, 2005). While representing one percent of the overall population, Statistics Canada noted, those who identified themselves as being Sikh, grew from 147,440 in 1991 to 278,400 in 2001, an increase of 89 percent (Statistics Canada, 2005). It should be noted that attempts at measuring concepts such as ethnicity are confronted with many difficulties. Problems of how to define ethnicity in the Census, and how those completing the census forms will interpret the ethnicity categories, mean that Statistics Canada Census data must be used with caution (Singh, 1994).

In Canada, the majority of Sikhs are from rural Punjab and have emigrated to Canada searching for a better life, namely more work opportunities and educational pursuits for their children. Most Sikhs have emigrated through relative sponsorship (Assanand et al., 1990). Sikhs, although one of the smallest groups in India, represent one of the largest groups of migrants from India (Singh, 2004). The worldwide population of Sikhs is around 20 million, with over 19 million of these in India, and 14.5 million in the Punjab alone (Office of Registrar, 2004). Over half a million Sikhs are to be found in each of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, with many spread around the world, particularly in Australia, New Zealand, East Africa, Singapore and Malaysia (Singh, 1994). According to

the 2001 census, there were just under 280,000 Sikhs in Canada, with over 135,000 in B.C. and just under 105,000 in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Though South Asian immigration to Canada began as early as the 1900s with Sikh immigration to British Columbia, the majority of South Asian immigration to Canada occurred between 1967 and 1986 (Parameswaran, 1995; Richmond, 1994; White & Nanda, 1990). Of all South Asians living in Canada in 1986, 94% arrived after 1966 (White & Nanda, 1990). The peak of South Asian immigration occurred between 1967 and 1977 (Richmond, 1994). The majority of South Asians who immigrated to Canada between 1967 and 1986 were young adults who started their families in Canada. The children of immigrants began to 'come of age' during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

As first-generation Sikhs grow up in Canada they are facing different issues to their parents but these are no less important and critical to their sense of self, their place in their communities and perhaps most importantly the interplay between their ethnicity and their identity. Like their parents, they are indeed faced with a number of often conflicting and polarized cultural issues, but these are less to do with acculturation and more to do with spanning different cultures. Acculturation generally involves consistent first-hand contact between two autonomous cultures, leading to a change in one of the two (Berry as cited in Ghuman, 1994a). Chandrasekhar (1985) described the relationship between the two cultures as one-way, implying that one culture gives up its identity while the second culture remains the same. In this way acculturation has been linked with assimilation. Assimilation implies that the subordinate ethnic group abandons its cultural heritage and becomes completely immersed in the dominant culture. However some research maintains that acculturation is a

reciprocal process, whereby both cultures experience changes in identity as a result of their influence on each other (Ghuman, 1994).

The first-generation born in Canada are finding ways to deal with the issues that such a process has thrown in their way. This may involve many different issues, some to do with expectations of their family, others to do with the day-to-day coping of the perceptual differences that may affect their lives.

First-born

Children of immigrants undergo different acculturation processes. Immersed in both the Western and natal cultures from birth, first-generation children simultaneously explore two (or more) potentially conflicting cultures to become comfortable in their identities (Kwak & Berry, 2001). This more complex type of acculturation presents its own consequences. First-generation immigrants are likely to report daily hassles and in-group conflict, lowered self-esteem, and increased frequent diagnoses of internalizing disorders than immigrants or North American-born peers of same age and socio-economic status (Kwak & Berry, 2001). One reason for this may be that unlike immigrants, these individuals do not have sustained, direct experiences with their natal culture. Most natal cultural knowledge is delivered to them through family members, scholarly materials, images proliferated through the media, or cultural rituals performed within the household (Wakil et al., 1981). As a result, first-generation children often feel disconnected from their family's natal culture.

One way in which first-generation immigrants cope with feelings of alienation from their natal culture is by attempting to assimilate and gain acceptance from the Canadian culture (Dusenbery, 1988). The first-generation child's desire to assimilate is frequently met

with resistance from their immigrant parents. Immigrant families tend to endorse more traditional values than native-born families and these values often conflict with the kinds of freedom desired by the first-generation who are seeking assimilation. Basic rites of passage such as dating, expression of sexual attraction, and engaging in social interactions outside of school can become battlegrounds in immigrant families, with parents restricting their child's behaviour (Kwak & Berry, 2001).

First-generation parents often urge their children to identify with their natal culture by insisting that they participate in natal cultural activities, establish friendships and romantic relationships with mostly natal peers, and adopt values and beliefs consistent with the natal culture (Walton-Roberts & Pratt, 2005). These discrepant goals and motives tend to have a deleterious effect on parent-child relationships within immigrant families, frequently fostering resentment and distrust (Walton-Roberts & Pratt, 2005). In many cases, the adolescent may hide various choices she has made from their parents in an effort to avoid punishment or scorn, even if she considers those choices to be age-appropriate.

These strained family dynamics are problematic for a variety of reasons. Research has suggested that complete acculturation into either the 'host' or the natal culture is associated with lowered well-being among second-generation immigrants. In contrast, optimal and sustained well-being seems to come from adopting a bicultural identity wherein both natal and 'host' cultures are represented (Szapocznik et al., 1986). Children who are intrinsically interested in maintaining this balance have been shown to do well over time. If second-generation children are discouraged from exploring their 'host' culture by their parents and become resentful towards their natal culture as a result, then conditions within the family are

not favorable for the development of a healthy natal cultural identity among second-generation immigrants, potentially placing them at risk for experiencing negative well-being.

Nodwell's (1993) work has shown that even second-generation immigrants that are born in North America are still attempting to become part of the dominant culture. These descendants of immigrants, while native-born, are only partially integrated into the 'host' country's culture. This is not necessarily due to the 'host' country's resistance to welcoming these individuals but is also related to these people's desire to stay loyal to the older generation, the home country, and even eastern values. Nodwell (1993) noted that Indian immigrants found the need "to maintain Indian culture", which took place primarily in homes, religious places, social clubs, and specialty stores.

To better understand the issues facing Sikhs in Canada it is important to understand how their beliefs and practices differ from mainstream Canadians. Relative to Sikh culture, values such as individualism, gender integration, and an egalitarian social structure dictate much of Canadian society (Kanungo, 1984). Individuals, for the most part, are free to make important life decisions according to their own beliefs. Relationships between men and women outside of marriage, such as dating, are encouraged. Women are free to make decisions with respect to men and sexuality. The situation is quite different for individuals who have East Indian backgrounds with values which emphasize that familial obligations and actions carried out by family members affect the entire family (Dhruvarajan, 1996). Gender segregation is also characteristic of East Indian cultures. Daughters are usually expected to consider their family honor at all times and obey the demands of husbands, fathers, in-laws, and brothers (Dua, 1992).

A series of studies in southern Ontario by Naidoo (Naidoo, 1980; Campbell, 1988) indicates that South Asian women reveal a duality in life orientation with both "traditional" and "contemporary" attitudes. "Traditional" is defined as pertaining to values, beliefs and customs handed down from generation to generation, often firmly adhered to, and less subject to forces of acculturation as migratory groups come into contact with other cultures; and as referring to the belief that a woman's primary responsibilities are home-making and child-rearing (Naidoo & Campbell, 1988). "Contemporary" is defined as designating those values, beliefs and customs prevailing in the mainstream culture to which migratory groups have/are being acculturated; and, refers to the belief that women should be as free as men to pursue educational and occupational goals; that men and women should share equality in responsibilities inside and outside the home (Naidoo & Campbell, 1988).

Naidoo's dated 1980 interview study with 210 respondents suggested that with respect to marriage, family, and religion, South Asian women, as compared to ethnically Anglo-Saxon women, remained "traditional". However, they were "contemporary" with regard to high aspirations in purusing education and careers outside the home. A later study utilizing survey interviews (Naidoo & Davis, 1988) again found a sample of 300 South Asian women to have "contemporary" values related to education, achievement, success, and aspirations for themselves and their daughters, and to remain "unaccultured" with respect to "traditional" values pertaining to home, children, religion, and gender roles.

Overall, these studies appear to indicate that South Asian women in Canada welcome "modernization", from dress and food, to careers and higher education. However, they do not embrace "westernization" in the more deeply rooted values involving family.

> South Asian women seem to want the best of both worlds. On one hand, they desire a greater range of freedom outside the home and more control over things within it. ...

> On the other hand, immigrant wives and mothers continue to ground their identity in the family. ... They see many Canadian notions about family, marriage and children as threats to this family-linked identity. At the same time, they value family access to Canadian educational, economic, and social opportunities even though they are aware that these have potential for further weakening what they value about the traditional family (Buchignani & Indra, 1985, p. 49).

Unfortunately, this "dualistic" outlook of South Asian Canadian women has contributed to conflict within the home along with the changes in family organization. South Asian women find it increasingly difficult to accept traditionally defined gender roles. Furthermore, Canadian-born women find it difficult to regard their spouse as "husband-lord", as tradition dictates (Vaidyanathan & Naidoo, 1991). The incidence of reports of battering within this community appears to be related to the women's pursuit of education and careers outside the home, combined with their husbands' continued expectation to maintain their traditional role within the family (Assanand et al., 1990).

Previous studies and analysis of South Asian women living in the west conducted by South Asian women and non-South Asians have been criticized for locating gender oppression in South Asian culture and hence deemed colonialist in their assumptions (Dua, 1992). One such example is the previously cited work in southern Ontario (Naidoo & Davis, 1988; Naidoo, 1980) that described South Asian women as characterized by "duality" (i.e., "traditional" and "contemporary").

Tee's (1996) study found a similar "duality" in the women's narratives in that many of the first- and second-generation women valued some aspects of the "traditional" notions of family and marriage, as well as personal development in the pursuit of education and career, and furthermore demanded or wished for equality in their relationships – not unlike many "mainstream" Canadian women.

The generation gap increases between parents and children, mothers and daughters, as the first-generation question the issues of dating, arranged marriages, and gendered hierarchies. Adjustment to Canadian society and negotiating culturally traditional values and assumptions challenge those who have recently immigrated and even those who have lived in Canada for three generations. As the space between "back home" and "here" becomes wider and the gulf between immigrant parents and "Canadianized" children expands, conflict and crisis put stress on the family system and the hierarchy of roles tumbles down.

South Asian children and adolescents are often caught between traditional cultural values and practices and those of Canadian society. For example, the experience of the Canadian school system which teaches freedom of thought, individuality, and independent decision making, stands in direct contrast to South Asian extended family values where the family unit's needs are more important than the individual's. South Asian teenage girls who are not allowed to date may be torn between peer pressure at school and traditional parental expectations. These conflicts can lead to rebellion and depression (Tee, 1996). The desire to seek approval from family and from peers often causes stressful complexities in negotiating an identity. Understanding self and identity in this complexity increases the risk of anxiety and confusion.

One extremely private part of our everyday lives is romantic relationships. Das and Kemp (1997) found that South Asian parents have difficulty grasping the concept of a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship since their notions of love and marriage tend to be closely associated with duty and familial obligations. Dating, in adolescence, is commonly associated with exploration and finding one's self. These are difficult concepts for South Asian parents to understand, especially with respect to their daughters. Drury (1991) reports

that Indo-Canadian teens often feel caught between their parents' world of Indian values where dating is a no-no, and the world of Canadian culture, where teenage dating is the norm.

As mentioned earlier, the school environment promotes personal autonomy and independent decision-making, whereas, the home environment suggests conformity, family interests before the individual's interests, group decisions, and unconditional respect and obedience towards older family members. Punjabi women may experience difficulties accommodating both value systems into their tenuous lifestyle, which may result in resenting their home culture while simultaneously trying to assimilate into the dominant culture (Das & Kemp, 1997).

Issues such as dating, arranged marriages, gender segregation, gender inequality, individualism, and familial obligations may cause serious family problems within East Indian communities in Canada (Naidoo, 1992). As an increasing number of women with East Indian heritage living in Canada are becoming educated and financially independent, their loyalties to certain East Indian traditions seem to be decreasing. This trend has been identified in the literature and many researchers have suggested that it is an inevitable outcome of the adaptation process (Dhruvarajan, 1996; Naidoo & Vaidyanathan, 1990).

Childrearing emphasis is on obedience, duty, respect for elders, and sacrifice for the group (Sharma, 2003). From a western perspective, it may appear that a child's requests for more freedom and independence are reasonable, but this stance can invalidate the parents' knowledge of childrearing. Woollett et al.'s (1994) research dealt with Sikh youth in Britain, yet her findings have a degree of resonance in the Canadian context. She found, for example,

that ethnicity was a source of cultural conflict in Britain as adolescent Sikhs felt that they were being pulled between two ways of life:

> ... I go to school and get Westernized ideas pushed into my brain day in and day out. When I get home, I only get it when my mom and dad shout at me or when there's a lecture given to us.... I mean ... you get pulled between two ways of life.... I mean the thing is that really bugs me, you can't be religious and be Westernized. You have to be ... religious or be Westernized. You can't have both of two worlds.... (Woollett, et al., 1994, p 61).

Most problems were associated with lack of communication between the generations. Parents felt torn as they attempt to keep their children away from Western influences, while at the same time their children were caught between two opposing cultures (Kurian, 1986).

The Sikh women who are not necessarily living in prescribed roles find themselves juggling or integrating some of the core values of the two cultures that they are immersed in. The South Asian value emphasizing family and the collective harmony of "we", in contrast to the western striving for individuality and independence, can either collide with, exclude, or balance each other in these women's lives. For some, this is a battle that is fought either internally or externally, while for others, the best of both worlds are at their disposal.

Researcher James (1999) suggested that there could be two alternative reactions to the situation in which the first-generation find themselves: the rebel reaction (behaving like an Englishman), or the in-group reaction (behaving like a Punjabi). However, the researcher feels that it is important to note that many of these Punjabis will not be "passive victims of their circumstances" (James, 1999, p 31). Researchers have also stated that, in general, many second generation immigrants have an active role in deciding what cultures their affiliation is, the levels of ethnicity, and roles they are going to play within the society (Ghuman, 1994b). This also follows our understanding of situational ethnicity behavior. It is not an either/or case, rather an evolvement and balanced mixture of two cultures (Ghuman, 1994b).

Situational Ethnicity

There are some modes of thought that capture the complexity of identity formation for South Asian women, recognizing the diversity that exists within the community. Nodwell (1993) refers to the concept of 'situational ethnicity', which appears to be a compelling option for South Asian women. Identity changes, dependent upon the situation or context an individual is facing: Situational ethnicity attempts to explain situations where many ethnic groups reside together and where ethnic categories overlap and encompass one another. This approach suggests that individuals do not hold a firm or exclusive commitment towards a single cultural identity. Self-identification may change according to experience. The perspective of situational ethnicity focuses on outward behavior and knowledge of how to act appropriately in different situations (Nodwell, 1993).

This idea refers to individuals who know how to 'act' differently in various settings, for example at home and in the school environment. For instance, in the classroom a Sikh woman may be encouraged to question while at the family dinner she is expected to defer to the elders of the family – in other words, "only speak when spoken to".

Describing this struggle as it pertains to second-generation South Asian women in American society, Lata Mani writes, "Caught between parental desire for conformity with cultural norms that are at odds with their peers' and their own (often uneasy) integration into U.S. society, many second generation women find themselves literally struggling to know their place and identity" (Mani, 1993, p 57).

Nodwell (1993) states that situational ethnicity recognizes that personal identities may be mutually exclusive or encompassing and overlapping. Therefore, this concept is useful in examining identity formation of South Asian women, who might see themselves

according to their religion (Sikh), parent's nationality (Indian), ethno-cultural group (Punjabi) as well as their own citizenship (Canadian), depending upon the set of circumstances they encounter on a regular basis. How women prioritize these multiple identities in any given situation may influence their ability to co-exist in both Canadian and South Asian cultures.

Bains (1997) narrates how growing up in Western society with her sister, they often wanted to wear "Canadian" clothes to Indian community functions. If forbidden, they pleaded with their father "not to take the car out of the garage before we get in, lest the neighbours spot us dressed up in our elaborate outfits". This notion parallels Nodwell's (1993, p 37) analysis of situational ethnicity where she makes mention of Indo-Canadian girls who have a wardrobe of Indian clothing (i.e., saris and Punjabi "suits"). While Indian clothing is worn to community events and functions, "these same girls would not wear these clothes to school". This demonstrates the need for South Asians to construct their ethnic identity according to the set of conditions they face on a daily basis. Singer (as cited in Nodwell, 1993, 28) affirms that individuals often have to "compartmentalize their behaviours according to circumstance".

Handa (2003) found that young South Asian women's relationship with clothes also reveals hidden norms with respect to multicultural "tolerance". She maintains that western clothes are important to "fitting in" and that "other" kinds of clothes, namely the *salwaar kameez*, carry the marker of difference. That wearing a *salwaar kameez* involves "dressing up" and makes a statement indicates that the wearing of "western" clothes promises a sense of normalcy and anonymity that South Asian clothes do not.

Roland (1988, p 54) summarizes her sentiments about situational ethnicity:

> It seems that ethnic individuals adopt a variety of strategies in dealing with their dual cultural environment. For some, the primary ethnic group serves as the most potent identification. Others adopt a more assimilatory position or view themselves as members of two cultural worlds, switching identification according to the situation.

Situational ethnicity permits Sikh women the option of selecting and discarding assorted cultural values and traditions. What eventually occurs is that individuals assume different identities according to the situation.

Ho (1995) contends that individuals raised in multiethnic environments may develop multicultural or hybrid identities. Bains (1997) suggests, similar to situational ethnicity, hybridized cultures are created as a result of constant socialization and transfer of information from individuals of diverse cultures.

Furthermore, Ghuman (1999) suggests this trend in Vancouver with teachers claiming that their Punjabi Asian students possess multiple identities. Helweg (1986) suggests that British Punjabis are likely to be actively choosing their societal roles. Previous work on ethnicity and identity is then discussed with a particular focus on situational ethnicity. Ghuman (1997) notes that the idea of a "transitory psychological state" may be especially relevant to second-generation Asians; their emotional responses to different situations are termed "emotional situational ethnicity". This means that second-generation Punjabis are likely to have developed a continuous emotional response in their lives that is more revealing than looking at their behaviour purely in the context of discrete situations (Ghuman, 1997).

First-generation Sikh Canadian women find themselves negotiating identities between the folds of multiple worlds. These worlds include relationships developed in school, occupation, leisure activities, religious affiliations, and family. Each world contains assumptions dictating appropriate thought and behaviour. The upcoming chapter will discuss the existing literature pertaining to this research study.

Chapter 3: Review of the Literature

Most South Asian Canadian literature has focused on immigration and settlement patterns, emphasizing the experiences of the immigrant population itself. Although there has been some research with first-generation South Asian women, most of the sociological studies have been observational, and the handful of psychological ones are based on questionnaires and surveys, with only a few involving interviews (Dhruvarajan, 2003; Drury, 1991; Mann, 1998; Sharma, 2003; Tee, 1996). This review focuses on the sociological and psychological literature since the findings (in Chapter 5) did not address specific ideals which could have considered elaborating on literature in direct relation to the social work discipline. This literature review aims to highlight themes from the study's findings.

Research specific to first-generation Canadian-born Sikh women is scant. The studies of Sikh women's constructed quality of identity and examinations of the processes have barely been recognized. Phenomenological accounts of the experiences of South Asian Canadians are rare. Limited literature directly addresses cultural or social issues concerning young women of South Asian families in smaller communities of Canada, particularly from the point of view of the women themselves. The majority of the community or case studies on Sikhs in Canada are located in British Columbia, which is congruent with their demographics. As with most studies on South Asians in Canada, they generally focus on the urban centres. This following chapter hopes to highlight the research and themes pertinent to this study.

A comparative study of Sikhs and Portuguese was conducted in the Okanagan Valley which focused on regional immigration dispersal in Squamish and Kelowna, where Indians were a significant group (Joy, 1989). Chadney (1984) has given a detailed look at the Sikh

community in Vancouver based on fieldwork done in the 1970s. Nayar (2004) has written an insightful book on the issues of adaptation process and integration of the Sikh community in Vancouver based on a traditional-modern model and analysis centred on the differences among three generations. Judge (1994) looks at the formation of the Punjabi community in Vancouver and Edmonton. The stories of Sikh pioneers in Canada from the first half of the twentieth century are presented by Jagpal (1994). On an even more micro level, one Sikh migrant's story is presented in his own words in the format of a life history (Bains & Johnston, 1995). There is also a recent case study of Indian Punjabi immigrants in Whitehorse, Yukon (Larsen, 2006).

Family First

In India, family is the most important social unit and consists of extended members including parents and children, grandparents, brothers, sisters and their families (Assanand et al., 1990). Traditionally, the extended family members live together and this extended family network provides the identity of the individual, along with economic security and emotional support (Assanand et al., 1990). Interdependence is valued highly and the lifestyle is collective rather than individualistic. Most decisions are made by the head of the household who is usually the most established, financially secure male. On all important matters close relatives are consulted and their opinions are given considerable weight. Even in Canada, many nuclear families live with extended family members and decision-making and information sharing is common.

Some women describe how they sacrificed happiness for the betterment of the family and would never bring shame or feelings of disappointment to their family name. Family and

family life are central to the Punjabi soul and not taken for granted. Family is seen as a source of strength and unconditional support (Das & Kemp, 1997; Medora et al., 2000).

A most evocative description of familistic preferences in Asian collectivistic settings is given by Roland (1988). He described a "familial self" for Japanese and Indians that contrasts with the "individual self" of mainstream Americans. The "familial self" involves connectedness, emotional involvement, empathy with receptivity to one's family of origin, and strong identification with the honor and reputation of the extended family over attachments to outsiders.

Woman's Familiarity

Sikh women face considerable stress while trying to find a place for themselves in different cultures. When values and beliefs of two cultures are perceived as incompatible, individuals are faced with the dilemma of choosing between the two (Segal, 1991) The outcome of this stress can lead to difficulties in maintaining a sense of self, when the daily continuity of behavior and thought is brought into question by the individual, her family, and community (Segal, 1991). Women are considered to bear the honour of the family and traditional society is very protective of them. The honour of the family depends largely on the purity of the daughter before marriage.

Ghuman (1994b, p 42) believed that "Asian parents are very protective of their daughters because of their perceptions of the host society's problems with drugs and undue emphasis on sex". In Canada, as in India, Indian girls are given less freedom, as females continue to embody tradition and culture (Dhruvarajan, 2003; Mahmood & Brady, 2000). Indeed, Dhruvarajan has contended that not only is chastity critical before marriage, but

family honour is tied to its daughters' "impeccable moral conduct," which the parents have a duty to protect (Dhruvarajan, 2003).

Living with ones' in-laws after marriage is a tradition for daughters in East Indian culture. Sons stay and care for their parents in old age. When they marry, their wives are expected to live with the husband's family (Mann, 1998). Girls are taught from the start that they are temporary members of their families waiting to be given as a gift to someone else. Thus, at marriage, a girl is given to her husband and becomes a member of his family. She is taught, usually subliminally, that once given in marriage, she may never leave her husband's home. There is a great deal of support from the families as well as social pressure to make a marriage work (Assanand et al., 1990). In traditional culture, a woman is seen as her husband's possession and she is taught to be submissive and to obey him (Assanand et al., 1990).

It can be said that a Sikh woman has not been raised to be independent. The steps towards practical/financial independence such as gaining English fluency, education, job training, and eventual employment, can be undermined by cultural barriers to psychological independence. If a woman chooses to leave an abusive relationship, separating from her husband may also include leaving the family and social exile from the community; hence, the psychological consequences of this "independence" for the identity are likely to be devastating because of her interdependence with family (Tee, 1996).

Mann's 1998 study indicated that community expectations and norms appeared to be common threads connecting many issues for her participants. Both mothers and daughters felt that doing what was right for the sake of the community out-weighed their personal preferences in some instances. However, the picture is not as clear cut as it seems.

Throughout the interviews the women seemed to be caught between what they thought they were supposed to do according to tradition, and what they wanted to do. For the mothers, being caught in between translated into choosing to go against rules that they were raised with in order to maintain open and close relationships with their children. For the daughters, the expectations translated into a constant need for freedom in all facets of their lives, while at the same time maintaining a respectful relationship with their parents. Clearly, both groups of women appeared to be experiencing a pull from two opposite directions. The mothers felt a need to remain loyal to traditions while at the same time they wanted to give their children a happy upbringing in a society very different from theirs. The daughters wanted to live in this Western society as young, free, and independent women without sacrificing their relationships with their families (Mann, 1998).

Randhawa (1994) comments that "most Indian girls are taught, sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly, that obedience is the ideal. Anything else, even so much as questioning traditional expectations, is perceived as a form of rebellion". Families are typically the agents of socialization and the transmitters of tradition. Anthropological and sociological studies indicate that despite efforts to resist change and maintain traditions, there are structural changes occurring within the family in the process of adapting to the Western culture. These changes are creating a "clash of traditions" (Ashcraft, 1986), throwing families into crisis, including domestic violence, and the second generation into a sense of alienation and displacement.

As children grow up, they are expected to adhere to the hierarchy in families. As Sharma (2003, p57) explains,

> Children become aware as they grow up that senior members of the family have precedence in conversation...A daughter-in-law usually says little in the presence of

> her mother-in-law and of older women, let alone in the presence of her father-in-law. Those who argue and assert themselves are likely to be criticized for it.

This behaviour creates a conflicting set of ideals for young women when they step outside of the home, into a society that encourages youth to question authority.

Espin (1995) has commented that religiously sanctioned gender roles and the "double standard" associated with them have become growing problems for Sikh youth in America. It is noted that in the Punjabi culture, girls are expected to be "protected," submissive, shy, and quiet, while Dhruvarajan's study (2003, p 63) confirmed that parents placed a "tighter grip" on females, and exhibited a tendency to be more protective and controlling of females.

Gender Roles

Culture, language, and religious preservation along with family expectations and responsibilities are enforced in most collective households. Sikh women are also expected to conform to the gender roles dictated in their homes. Studies carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s also identified increasing conflict between East Indian parents and children, particularly on the topics of gender roles and familial obligations (Dhruvarajan, 1996; Vaidyanathan & Naidoo, 1991). Most studies suggested the conflict between parents and children had to do with double standards and the fact that sons were almost always given more freedom than daughters (Dhruvarajan, 1996). Women provide the emotional glue and their honour determines the social position of the family (Roland, 1988). However, the men hold the overt power both in the public and private spheres, and for more and more women, this power structure is unacceptable.

Patriarchal households continue to be prominent in Punjabi households today (Das & Kemp, 1997). Mani (1993, p 48) discusses the gendered nature of cultural conflict in the South Asian Diaspora, commenting that, "there is no rupture in patriarchal power with

migration, merely its reconfiguration" suggesting that this may be due in part to the patriarchal structure of the societies they migrate to as Canadian society typically supports many patriarchal values.

In general, children from South Asian homes are more strictly controlled by their families than are Canadian children. It is thought that boys are given more freedom than girls as they will be the earners in the household and must learn to deal with the outside world. Girls are very protected. In some families, a girl may be expected to come straight home from school and may not have the freedom, for example, to go shopping with friends, to use the local library, or to go to summer camp (Assanand et al., 1990). This would naturally cause resentment towards the parents but also towards male siblings.

Kurian (1986) studied East Indian families in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, regarding the differences in raising boys and girls. He found that parents permitted more freedom to sons than to daughters in areas such as choice of friends, dating, and marriage (Kurian, 1986).

According to Wadhwani (1999), females usually begin their lives in an environment filled with sadness. As children and adults they are exposed to considerable stress and anxiety. Although boys are free to play and interact with other children, girls are kept under strict watch by their parents. Girls are not allowed to speak to men other than immediate family members and are expected to exercise extreme caution in their presence. Above all they are taught to obey the demands of their parents, brothers, and husband meekly, without question (Wadhwani, 1999). In this way females are socialized to consider men superior to themselves. Furthermore, they are made aware that if they go against the rules, their family's honour will be threatened and their chances of making an acceptable marriage will be jeopardized. This is a difficult burden for a child to carry. For most females, it is easier to

submit to the demands of the culture, than risk their future and the future of their families by rebelling.

Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to be independent, active, and social (Kurian, 1986). They are raised with plenty of warmth and affection and are given considerable power within the family system. As it is the son's responsibility to look after his parents in their old age, parents direct their love towards their son as an investment in their future (Dhruvarajan, 1996)

Young daughters are prepared for their eventual marriage, the only goal set for them by their parents (Wadhwani, 1999). Girls are raised to be good daughters-in-law first and foremost, then good mothers and wives (Naidoo, 1987). Traditionally, once a girl is married her in-laws become her family and her own family ties are detached. This is a contrast with Western customs, where it is common to assume that once a daughter is married, her parents "do not lose a daughter, but gain a son."

In preparation for marriage young girls are taught to cook, clean, sew, and take care of their younger siblings. These are valued skills for good daughters-in-law, mothers, and wives (Dhruvarajan, 1996). Above all they are taught to respect their elders and to respect all men. "Good" East Indian women should remain virgins until marriage, thus maintaining their family's honor (Dhruvarajan, 1996). Women are expected to subordinate their lives to the welfare and needs of their husband's family, their children, and others. "In childhood, a woman must be subject to her father; in youth, to her husband; when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be free of subjugation" (Gupta, 1994, p 39). These expectations become so ingrained in women from birth until marriage that it is not surprising that these ideas about appropriate conduct become a part of their ideology.

Bariana, Gobin, and Hall (as cited in Dhruvarajan, 1996) also spoke about how the Indian culture has downgraded women in many ways for centuries. They have been deemed unworthy of education, restricted to being child bearers and housekeepers. In general, the male children have received preferential treatment in all areas of life. Women have been subjected to economic, social, cultural, and judicial oppression from birth to death. Women were regarded as a source of sin and obstruction to a man's salvation; they were declared devoid of intelligence (Dhruvarajan, 1996).

East Indian men consider women subservient and dependent. Problems arise as young, independent women are expected to marry East Indian men who will not accept the assertion of their independence (Dhruvarajan, 1996). Many conflicts are due to male dominance, restrictions, and demands placed on women. For instance, most women work outside the home (a Western value) and are expected to carry out all household and child care duties (an Indian practice).

Wakil et al. (1981) and Ghuman (1994b) also found the parents in this study are more liberal with their male children than they are with their female children. There is an underlying assumption that the daughters of the household are to preserve, maintain, and transmit the culture to their siblings and offspring. It is necessary for these females to adhere to a more "traditional" way of life by spending more time at home and learning about the role of a typical Indian woman.

In 1991, Drury examined the ethnic identity formation of Sikh females in the United Kingdom. She informally interviewed 102 second-generation Sikh females. The female participants mentioned that they did not receive as much freedom as their male siblings in

terms of dating. It was acceptable that their brothers date outside of the culture as long as they revert back to their prescribed cultural values by marriageable age.

Participants also discussed some of their gender specific duties and chores (Drury, 1991). Females are expected to stay at home to help their mother and engage in minimal socialization outside of the home. Her findings suggest that females were expected to conform to the arranged marriage concept as a means of cultural preservation (Drury, 1991).

Asha (1997) describes the differences of power, knowledge, and experiences on the basis of gender amongst South Asian Canadian women. Asha writes:

> As Indian women we feel the pain. We feel the frustration. We know the double standard between men and women [...] The struggle for us as South Asian women, to cope with the patriarchy experienced through our fathers and brothers (that is, a patriarchy based in the authority of the family and the importance of tradition), versus the dominant Western ideology of individualism in which we circulate everyday (that I might suggest is also patriarchal). For us, as young, privileged South Asian women, gender as difference is experienced constantly as a "double-standard in which I get cheated" (1997, p 74).

Dhruvarajan (2003) explained that many Indo-Canadian parents also have "core and peripheral values." They will negotiate a balance of values, yet will not overstep certain perimeters. Core values that are not negotiable include marriage and dating, while peripheral values, such as eating habits, are open to discussion (Dhruvarajan, 2003).

The worst part is that subjugation has become so much a part of these women's lives that they do not even acknowledge that it exists (Sikhwoman.com, 2005). A drastic distinction between the roles of the male and female exists in all of history's modern human societies. Because people use religious doctrine to define their life styles, religious scriptures in both the East and the West seem to condone, even encourage, the unequal treatment of women. As mentioned earlier, in the fifteenth century, Guru Nanak established Sikhism, the first religion to advocate emphatically the equality of all people, especially women. In a

continent characterized by severe degradation of women, this bold declaration, along with others, determined to erase the impurities of the Indian society. However, prejudices and injustices based on gender linger even today.

Sikhs have succumbed to the ways of Indian Culture rather than the ideals of the Guru. Equality between men and women in Sikhism has become mere rhetoric. The status of the Sikh woman has often become one of low self-esteem, hence incapable of independent identity without a male figure (a husband, father, or a son) and inferior in education, hence not rising beyond traditional roles and devoid of leadership qualities.

Immigrant Parents

A common cause of parent-child struggles is the difference in rates of acculturation (Tatla, 1998). To look at this issue, we can imagine immigrant parents coming to this country and raising children who have one foot in the dominant Canadian culture and the other in the family's culture. Since the values may well be competing, conflicts within the family become reality. Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) writes that Asian parents expect their children to be quiet, obedient, polite, and respectful; yet North American values emphasize independence, assertiveness, and open communications. Conflict is often unavoidable.

Relations between parents and youth tend to be conceptualized in over-simplified, dichotomous terms positing the parallel and conflicting pairs of objectifications of parents/children, Indian/Western, and traditional/modern, positions which are separated by an unbridgeable generation gap.

This generation gap, which is also a cultural gap, is the basis for many conflicts within the family. Traditional parents fear the "corrupting" influence of western culture,

worrying that their children will stray into the dishonour of outright rebellion, sexual promiscuity, divorce, common-law relationships, and disrespect elders (Wakil et al., 1981).

According to one study done with immigrants from India living in Calgary, Alberta, parents who were willing to accept their children's choices of friends (males or females) were those who had been exposed to urban influences in India as they grew up (Kurian, 1986). These parents tended to be less authoritarian and described their relationships with their children as being less formal than the traditional East Indian parent-child relationships. Therefore, differences in exposure to urban versus rural influences while living in India may be factors in intergenerational relationships between East Indian immigrants and their children. Asha (1997) found that the Indian community in Canada is much more restrictive, perhaps because it is always trying so desperately to hang on to its Indian identity.

Singh (1994) outlines the problems Sikh Canadian families have that differentiate them from typical Western Canadian families:

> There is a communication gap between young and old, but for the Punjabis it is aggravated since the language at home is totally different from that of school and work. Canadian-born Sikh children are not fluent in Punjabi because English has played an important role in their lives at an early age. The conversations of their parents and relatives as it relates to their religion and culture are literally meaningless to them.

Thus, the community is attempting to raise consciousness to preserve the Sikh identity. It is a particularly arduous task for parents who want to ensure that Sikh customs and traditions are maintained but not at the cost of losing control over their children due to household regulations and rules that are overly strict.

South Asian parents who wish to retain their cultural expression within the home encounter more difficulty once children attend public school (Lessinger, 1995). Parents often respond by taking the positives from both cultures and finding a middle ground. Those who

have difficulty accommodating both cultures may struggle more with their children, who may resent the imposition of cultural norms that differ from those of their school friends. These conflicts can become unresolvable, resulting in the need for social work intervention, including child protection if violence is involved.

Sandhu's (1997) study explained that in terms of parental expectations, many of the youth in the sample believed that the values of their parents did not contradict, or conflict with, their own beliefs, and many stated they had gained a better understanding of their parents' perspectives over time. Yet, there were areas of conflict. For example, some of the youth described dating as being taboo, while one youth explained that her parents disapproved of dating because of promiscuity and the threat of teenage pregnancies they associated with it (Sandhu, 1997). The intergenerational conflict between Sikh parents and their youth over things such as dating was made manifest in ways that were hardly surprising. Some of the youth in the sample, particularly some of the females described how they had to lie to their parents about what they were doing and who they were with because they knew their parents would not approve of their activities (Sandhu, 1997).

Larsen's (2006) research revealed both acts of defiance and feelings of guilt about lying to their parents about where they had been, since their parents did not approve of any socialization outside of school. Dhruvarajan (2003) further argued that South Asian youth frequently felt that their parents placed "unreasonable demands" on them to act in an "ideal manner" of being Indian, a pattern of behaviour that was regarded to be in conflict with how to "act" outside the home.

Families are often judged by the strength of these units and by "*izzat*", best translated as family honor (Sekhon & Szmigin, 2005). *Izzat* can and is applied in many contexts. It is

used to convey both the sense that children (in this case the first generation Canadian-born) should behave in a decent manner and thereby avoid bringing shame on their families and show respect for their elders. The combined factors of joint family units and respect for elders make up an important element of the social structure.

Women's purity is at stake and so *izzat* falls squarely on the shoulders of the daughters, of the women in the family, and they feel its power, which can often be painfully oppressive (Tee, 1996). Because of *izzat*, daughters have stepped gingerly, held or forced a silence, remained in physically abusive relationships, or been shunned by family and community (Tee, 1996).

Socialized and living in Canada, the first generation may reject (openly or secretly) their parents' core values, such as the arranged marriage system, the age-based and gender-based roles, as well as the overt and unspoken rules against socializing with peers (particularly non-Indians), dating (especially for girls), and interracial marriages. Although many families adopt a middle course between "traditional for its own sake" and Canadian patterns, the compromise often remains more oriented towards the traditional, to the dissatisfaction of the first-generation Canadian-born.

Children of Immigrant Parents

This generation has been educated and socialized in Canadian schools on an almost daily basis during their formative years (i.e., five days per week for twelve years or more) which would have a significant impact on them and their parents. They bring home their knowledge of the western world, as well as the values of Canadian society. Furthermore, although the first-generation are South Asian, they may have never visited the "back home" of their parents' nostalgia, and those who have assimilated may regard the customs and

values of their parents as quaint, "backward", or "repressive" as they make their way through Canadian culture, under the sometimes critically scrutinizing gaze of western eyes (Tee, 1996). Parent-child struggle may intensify as children try to act like their peers and parents see these behaviours as turning against the family and its values.

Although some may skilfully negotiate between cultures and integrate them, forming complex identities as some of the first-generation have, others may experience painful conflicts, their identities rather nebulous and floating, turning to one world and then the other, confused by both. Teenagers struggling between the cultures, between parental and peer expectations, often experience anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation and gestures (Gupta, 1994).

Agnew (1996) used the term "fragmented consciousness" to describe Sikh teenagers in Britain who were neither completely English nor Indian and who had adapted to different cultural fields individually. Agnew (1996) has further noted that Sikh youth have many layers to their social identities that include race, class, and gender and have multiple layers of cultural identity available to them through communities and schools. Takhar (2005), whose study involved Sikhs from East Africa who settled in Britain, similarly described these youth as not having a sense of belonging. At the same time, they were found to be consistently constructing new ways of being British-Sikh (Sekhon & Szmingin, 2005).

Doshi (as cited in Wadhwani, 1999, p 63) speaks of the struggle to meet in peer group expectations, parental expectations, while living in an insensitive and indifferent American society:

> As second generation South Asian Americans, fleshing out our identities becomes a rite of passage because everything we have to prove. We have to be "Americanized" or else we are not cool enough for the other members of our generation who are always at bars and clubs and refuse to learn their South Asian languages because it

> "just isn't cool". We have to be "proper South Asians" for our parents. We have to prove that we are American when asked ignorant questions from white society such as "where did you learn to speak English so well?".

Feelings of anger, isolation, and severe depression often manifest themselves in young South Asians as they grow up in Western society (Tee, 1996). If they want to make friends, they feel they must keep important parts of themselves out of connection, because they fear that if others really know them, they will lose the relationships. Or, they avoid friendships and keep to their old ways of being, for fear that they will lose an important part of themselves if they have contact with others. This leads to a powerful sense of isolation (Doris, 2003).

The traditional South Asian extended family is structurally organized by family roles based on patriarchy and gerontocracy. The husband/father holds the highest status, bearing the final authority, the wife defers to her husband and in-laws, and the children subordinate their will to the interests of the family (Naidoo & Davis, 1988; Mukherjee, 1980). By migrating, the South Asian family is uprooted from a society characterized by kinship ties, interdependence, and respect for age and authority, and moves into a host culture valuing independence, youth, and individualism (Wakil et al., 1981). As kinship ties become distant, the extended family dissolves into the nuclear or conjugal family and the questioning of the authority of the husband/father and elders engenders fundamental changes in familial status and role relations. The second generation are often blamed for the stresses and disintegration of the traditional family organization (Mukherjee, 1980).

Segal (1991) conducted two parent-youth seminars examining the values, beliefs, and expectations placed upon second-generation East Indian children. The topics that were discussed at these seminars involved the importance of communication between the parents and their offspring and the difficulties immigrants encounter in the dominant culture. What

was determined is that communication is considered poor between the parents and their children. It was observed that when a parent spoke, the child was expected to listen and agree.

This was also noticed in Ghuman's (1994) study where the children's viewpoints and opinions are seldom taken into account. Marriage and dating patterns were other issues of contention during these seminars. The parents' rationale for preventing their children from dating is the fear that they will marry outside of their culture and thereby "lose their cultural identity, heritage, values, and mores" (Segal, 1991, p 27).

Nesbitt's (1993) study examined how East Indian children preserve gender and religious traditions. She contends that the majority of children's gender viewpoints develop in their home environment. This major difference in values may lead to intergenerational conflict over issues such as educational aspirations, choice of friends, family obligations, and religion. Many of these individuals may feel pulled by both opposing forces, becoming confused and potentially alienated from both the school and home environments (Tee, 1996).

Woollett,, et. al. (1994) state that the social construction of gender and ethnicity among East Indian women is "fluid and changing". Sharma (2003) conducted a study to understand the development of cultural identities of second-generation South Asians in Toronto. She found that a new approach is needed that takes into account the ways in which youth occupy multiple selves calling upon appropriate cultural personas for given situations with grace and fluidity.

During adolescence and young adulthood, parent-child relationships typically change as both parent and child seek to redefine their roles in each others' lives (Tee, 1996). Previously set guidelines concerning the child's choices become unclear as the child

encounters novel experiences. Navigating these unchartered territories can cause tension in families with young adults, sometimes resulting in strained family interactions. While these transitions can be difficult for any family, families in which both parents are first-generation immigrants typically experience elevated stress as their second-generation children develop (Sharma, 2003). While there have been magazine articles, television programs, and films that address specific issues or topics (i.e. arranged marriages), more in-depth research of the present-day Sikh Canadian experience is necessary.

Identity

In a study connected by Handa (2003), young South Asian women interviewed received mixed messages about what "Canadian" means. On the one hand they are told that there are two dominant cultures in Canada (English and French), on the other hand, that their culture is just as important as the two primary ones. The message here is that you can be different but not too different from the dominant culture(s) (Handa, 2003).

The young women Handa (2003) interviewed revealed quite powerfully how the racialization of difference is a salient feature in how they are positioned in relation to "white" and "brown" and how they negotiate their own self-identifications. For them, culture is the everyday, lived experience which includes negotiating between being Canadian and being Sikh.

Multigenerational South Asian Canadian women have been immersed in various, often inextricably intertwined combinations and hybrids of 'Canadian', 'South Asian', 'Western', and 'South Asian Canadian' cultures since childhood. Multigenerational South Asian Canadian women do not need to learn new cultural languages; they are born into them.

They do not, chameleon-like, inhabit two discrete identities. The South Asian and Canadian components of their identities are not two separate, easily distinguishable entities.

By conceptualizing this diasporic space, the hybridity of multigenerational South Asian Canadian women's identities can be better articulated than they currently are in the literature which paints first-generation South Asian Canadians as 'caught between two cultures'. The word 'between' insinuates a division and a separateness, ignoring the hybrid nature of their identities. Just because the first-generation does not fit into what is seen as an 'authentic' Indian or 'Canadian' identity, does not mean that they have 'fallen between the cracks'. Rather, their identities fit into a third culture which is a hybrid of the 'two' (Agnew, 1996).

Nayar (2004) explains that a South Asian American mother usually remains within her Indian self in communications with her daughter. It was suggested that this is primarily in response to the watchful eye of the South Asian community and a need to seek approval, so she falls in step with the women around her. When mothers, grandmothers, aunties, and other women in the community behave similarly, daughters are presented with a continuity of identities. In this way, values, attitudes, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to the next. Without adequate means of communication, the differences between mothers and daughters, or the cultural generation gap, become more apparent.

Although a young woman may be struggling with her identity and appears to be like an average Canadian youth in the throes of individuation from family, it is critical not to assume that she is like a "typical" North American white woman. The problem of racism and internalized racism surrounds and invades her, as do gendered issues within her community. Furthermore, the importance of family for her must not be underestimated despite her wish

for separation. She may want to be her own person and not confined by restrictions which she views as archaic; however, she may wish to maintain strong connection with her family.

As the literature pertaining directly to the first-generation immigrant population has now been discussed, the next chapter will outline the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the research design.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The purpose of research is to generate knowledge. Qualitative data have been communicated via poetry, song, metaphor, theatre, or, more traditionally, through a case study or a listing of themes with supporting quotations (Turner, 2005). Qualitative research is defined as research that focuses on the experiences, interpretations, impressions, or motivations of an individual or individuals (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers may proceed from many different paradigms depending on the nature of their studies. To describe the lived experience of Canadian-born Sikh daughters of immigrant parents living in Prince George, British Columbia I chose phenomenology as an appropriate research paradigm.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides the opportunity to develop a descriptive, rich understanding and insight into individuals' attitudes, beliefs, concerns, motivations, aspirations, lifestyles, culture, behaviours, and preferences (Turner, 2005). Qualitative methodology offers emergent results that typically involve a relatively small sample of participants it aims to understand and explain participant meaning. The results are not intended to be generalizable to other populations (Patton, 2002). It was my intention to explore and understand the phenomena of living with a mixture of cultural influences from first-generation Sikh women.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is rooted in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. According to Husserl, as cited in van Manen (1997), phenomenology is a discipline that endeavours to describe how the world is constituted and experienced through conscious acts. Phenomenology is a study of the structure of consciousness in human experiences.

Husserl introduced the concept of *Lebenswelt* which means the life world. It is the world which is experienced as everyday life. These experiences include those related to bodily actions and sensory perception (what we see, hear, smell, and taste), beliefs, memory, decisions, fears, judgments, values, and feelings. In this tradition, the researcher believes that human experience makes most sense to those who live it and that such experience can be consciously expressed thus making the implicit explicit.

Creswell (1998) further explained that the major focus of Husserl's attention was with the uninterrupted world of everyday experience as a direct and immediate experience. This is the world as lived by the individual and the external entity is not separable from or independent of the individual. Husserl (1954/1970) reported that phenomenology enables human beings to describe their unique lived experiences (what it means to be a person), and what human beings think about their lived experiences (how we know the world).

While all phenomenological research is based on human activity and human experience, there are a number of different approaches employed in the process. The major concern of phenomenological research is with meaning and how it is constructed. Meaning is intentional in that it is about something; therefore, it cannot be constructed outside of the lived world. A phenomenon has no meaning except in relation to another phenomenon. Every phenomenon overlaps and becomes coextensive with other phenomena. Meaning arises through their inter-signification. This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others.

"Phenomena [of experience] are the building blocks of human science and the basis of all knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, 37).

Origins of Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl, (1859-1938), a German philosopher and ex-mathematician introduced phenomenology to the world in his work 'Logical Investigations' in the early 20th century. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a student, colleague and later rival of Husserl, was the other major figure in German phenomenology. Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), a pupil of Husserl, developed cultural or social phenomenology in which he proposed that all life worlds are based on 'stocks of common knowledge' that are shared by members of the life world. Schutz immigrated to the United States from Germany, and became a strong proponent of phenomenology in that country. With a large following across Europe phenomenology has become the major component in what is called 'continental philosophy' as opposed to the 'analytic' tradition that has typified philosophy in England and the United States (Moustakas, 1994).

Hegel and Kant used the term "phenomenology" earlier than Husserl. A string of related ideas traces back through the philosophical dialogue as far as Descartes: "What was said to possess objective reality existed only through representation in the mind; thus Descartes . . . reasoned that objective reality is in truth subjective reality" (Moustakas, 1994, p 21). The philosophy of Descartes influenced Husserl, who proposed that subjective experience presented the grounding of everything we claim to know.

Husserl's work is referred to as the descriptive phenomenological method, and Heidegger's work is referred to as hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 1997). Essentially, descriptive phenomenology seeks to

further one's understanding of a particular phenomenon by describing exactly what the researcher sees or hears without preconceived ideas or views about the phenomenon. Hermeneutic / interpretive phenomenology seeks underlying meanings about a particular phenomenon by accessing other sources external to the given data, such as established theories on human behaviour (Murray, 1987). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss other versions of phenomenology, such as transcendental phenomenology, or phenomenological psychology. This study uses a descriptive or narrative phenomenological paradigm to present the stories and voices of the Sikh women who participated in this study. For simplicity, I will use the term "phenomenology" generally.

Method

To explore the impact of cultural influences described by the Sikh women themselves, I chose a qualitative research method preceded by a phenomenological paradigm. The thoughts, views, and stories told to me by these women came from within themselves, known as Husserl's internal consciousness. I did not have to rely solely on external theories or explanations to complete my research, as the participants' data was more than sufficient to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of Canadian-born daughters of Sikh immigrant parents.

Bracketing

I am a Canadian-born Sikh woman of immigrant parents who was raised in Prince George; therefore, I conducted my research from an emic (insider) perspective. An emic approach is compatible with phenomenology as it focuses on furthering one's understanding and learning about a particular topic (phenomenon) from people

that have knowledge of the topic from their personal experiences (lived experiences) (Groenewald, 2004). Even though I certainly had prior views due to my own experiences with the phenomenon being studied, it was important for me to suspend these views as I wanted my research to be centered only on gathering and expressing other Sikh women's lived experiences. The process of researchers' suspending their beliefs, pre-conceptions, and knowledge to conduct phenomenological research is known as bracketing (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 1997)

Groenewald (2004) found that there was no set method for undertaking bracketing, and that it was more of a psychological orientation towards oneself rather than an observable set of procedures to be adopted by the researcher. Without concrete procedures to follow bracketing, I prepared for my interviews by repeatedly reminding myself that the purpose of my research was to explore and describe the lived experiences of my participants only. With this purpose in mind, prior to and during my interviews, I was able to stay open to new ideas and lived experiences about this life world, and limited my comments about my own experiences as a first-generation Sikh Canadian woman. I chose to bracket my own subjectivity since my personal experiences would not remain anonymous or confidential. Bracketing also allowed me to concentrate on the essence of meaning from the voices of the Sikh women interviewed.

Rigour of Method

Giorgi (1997) believes that researchers must be descriptive, use bracketing, and seek individual meanings to ensure rigour during the phenomenological research

process. The first step was to describe the lived experiences of first-generation Sikh women exactly as they described them.

Giorgi's (1997) second step for method rigour involved bracketing. By suspending my beliefs, knowledge, and views about my own personal experiences of being a Canadian-born Sikh woman of immigrant parents, I learned more about what other women with these personal attributes thought was significant in describing their culturally mixed life world. I perceived bracketing as a useful and important tool to assist me to carefully listen to each participant, limiting the possibility for my own biases and views to hinder me and accepting each participant's unique thoughts and views. While bracketing initially seemed to be an impossible task in itself, I believe with the heightened awareness of my own beliefs, pre-conceptions, and biases I was able to suspend my knowledge and viewpoints during my interviews with my participants.

The third step involved identifying common themes from my transcribed data of each Sikh woman's description of living with a mixture of cultural influences. A textural description was then prepared for each participant to review for accuracy. Groenewald (2004, p 42) defines this textural description as "an account of the individual's intuitive, pre-reflective perceptions of a phenomenon from every angle". This technique is also known as member checking which is used by researchers to help improve accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

Participants

In 2007, the first phase of data collection was to select appropriate participants who were able to share their experiences freely and accurately. Patton (2002) listed the requirements for selection of participants. The first requirement is that participants have had experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. The second requirement is that the participant has "the capacity to provide full and sensitive descriptions of the experience under examination". Within the above-mentioned requirements, eight Canadian-born Sikh women agreed to participate in this research.

Participant recruitment was done strictly through voluntary contact. The participant criteria were outlined on recruitment posters (see Appendix A) that were displayed in social service providers' offices (i.e., Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society), organizations (i.e., Sikh Temples), and institutions (i.e., University of Northern British Columbia and the College of New Caledonia). All participants were Canadian-born women and had parents who immigrated to Canada from Punjab, India. These women had to self-identify as Sikh and needed to be 19 years or older making all of them legal adults so they were able to consent to participation on their own. There were participants who recommended others for interviewing. I was directly contacted by those women who had been recommended to be a part of this research.

Individual Interviews

The interview method allowed for insights to be gained by having conversations with the women, unlike a structured questionnaire which does not permit such mutuality of exploration. This study utilized semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews aimed to

capture the individual descriptions and unique lived experiences of being a Canadian-born Sikh daughter of immigrant parents while living in Prince George. The interviews were audio tape-recorded. Participants were informed that the tape recording could be turned off if they preferred to exclude a segment. The individual interviews were approximately fifty minutes in length.

The interview questions were open-ended (see Appendix B) in hopes of eliciting rich dialogue from the participants. During my first interview, the participant recognized that being a Sikh Canadian born daughter provided certain life experiences, in addition to having immigrant parents, which articulated further opinions and thoughts. It was also important for the participants to talk about each question as long as required since phenomenological research is about seeking rich and detailed information about a particular phenomenon. When there were pauses during the interviews, I used this time to think about further questions to pose to the participants to clarify and expand on the information they had already shared with me. Giorgi (1997) comments that the collection of verbal data during interviews must allow the participants sufficient opportunities to express their viewpoints extensively.

Data Analysis

To commence my data analysis, I first listened to the audio tapes from my interviews. Listening to the tapes provided me with the verbal tones and inflections of the participants' lived experiences as they described their life world. Their tone of voice, along with silences, assisted with the development of some common themes and sub-themes. Careful and methodical listening enabled me to recognize lived experiences that were particularly important and relevant to the participants. Next, the audio recordings of the individual interviews were transcribed verbatim. The

information transcribed was entered into a word processing program. I carefully read the transcribed interviews to start the process of capturing the lived experiences of first generation Canadian-born Sikh women living with a mixture of cultural influences in a small community.

The Moustakas (1994) modification of van Kaam's (1966) method of analysis of phenomenological data was used to analyze the information contained in these Sikh women's stories (Moustakas, 1994). Statements were examined for horizons or unique themes. The process of horizonalization required that all comments relevant to the experience be considered of equal value and overlapping statements eliminated from each participant's transcript. In order to establish that each of these horizons actually contributed to the experience of living with a mixture of cultural influences, each statement from each participant was examined for the following two requirements: a) it contained a moment of the experience that is both a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it, and b) it was possible to "abstract and label" the expression relevant to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Once the process of reduction and elimination was completed through highlighting transcripts, the invariant meaning units were related and clustered into themes that became core to the experience. These themes were further tested against each complete transcript to determine if they were expressed explicitly or were compatible to the experience.

While the textural description depicts the 'what' of the experience, the structural description relates the 'how' it was experienced. It provides an account of the underlying dynamics of the experience and illustrates how the themes, thoughts, and feelings relate to the experience. Groenewald (2004) defines the structural description as "an account of the regularities of thought, judgment, imagination and

recollection that underlie the experience of a phenomenon and give meaning to it. As a researcher, I needed to look beyond the words of the textural description for how Sikh women actually experience living with a mixture of cultural influences. In order to reach a structural description, I had to read and listen to the transcripts several times and reflect on what the participant was really saying.

The final stage of the analysis involved the preparation of a composite structural and textural description of the meanings and essences of the experience representing the group of Sikh women as a whole. This description is a valuable part of the research as it enabled me to seek out common elements of experiences in all of the Sikh women's stories.

Ethical Considerations

Research rules governing confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time were fully explained to the participants at the beginning of each interview. It was very important to consider the welfare of the Sikh women who agreed to participate in my study. Pseudonyms replaced participants' names on all of the taped and manuscript data to protect the women's identity. Even though the participants' names are replaced by pseudonyms, it was made clear that since the Sikh community is fairly small in Prince George, there is the possibility of participants being identified. Thus, I strove to change identifying details in discussions with my supervisor. Any data was stored in a locked desk, which only the researcher had access to.

The 'Information and Consent Form to Participate in Research' (see Appendix C) was read and voluntarily signed by each Sikh woman prior to participation. Before participant

recruitment, the ethical conduct of this research was approved by the University of Northern British Columbia's Research Ethics Board (see Appendix D).

Effective phenomenological research involves a close personal connection between the researcher and the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I genuinely live the phenomenon under investigation; however, the participants provided the depth and meaning that animated the inquiry of what actually is the lived experience of Canadian-born daughters of Sikh immigrant parents in a small community.

The qualitative method and phenomenological paradigm assisted me to gain a better understanding of how these Sikh women live a culturally mixed life and provided me with the structure to explore and share their stories. van Manen (1997) concludes that phenomenological research does not serve to solve problems, but does serve to give more meaning to our lived experiences. The next chapter will highlight the lived experiences of eight Canadian-born Sikh daughters.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

The purpose of this research was to generate knowledge about the lived experiences of Canadian-born Sikh daughters of Indian immigrant parents in Prince George. Eight women offered their stories. Each voice provided me with rich and descriptive information. Even though each woman has a unique experience many horizons or themes emerge from this study. This chapter will explore those themes that underlie the phenomenon of life through a mixture of cultural influences. The chapter will illustrate the breakdown of categories into themes and clusters. Quotations from the transcribed interviews are inserted into the analysis to accentuate the lived experience of the individuals and highlight the meaning of the participant experiences.

Eight Sikh women from Prince George volunteered which provided a common cultural frame for participant experiences, thereby making the process of finding common themes easier and more practical. The participants were between 19 and 36 years of age (median age is 25.5). All the women had siblings, which included one or more brothers. Four women were married and three were mothers. Of the eight women interviewed, five were employed and two were post-secondary students.

Data collected from the eight separate interviews found four main themes: external influences, psychological factors, emotional effects, and positive attitudes and beliefs. Within these themes, the following sub themes were identified:

Table 5.1: Study Themes

External Influences	Psychological Factors	Emotional Effects	Positive Attitudes & Beliefs
Suppressed	Isolated	Misunderstood	Cultural values
Fear of judgment	Modifying existence	Confused	Feeling proud & unique
Gender differences	Struggle to balance	Angry	
Being of a small community	Self-conscious	Anxious	
Having immigrant parents		Pressured	

External influences

The women found that many external influences contributed to their lived experiences – from feeling suppressed or controlled, living with a constant fear of being judged, living a different experience than their brothers, being part of a small Sikh community in Prince George, to having immigrant parents from Punjab, India.

Suppressed.

Almost all of the women reported feeling suppressed or controlled by external influences. Gyan indicated that "the biggest word I would use for how I grew up, I grew up suppressed". Geena said "[parents] control the path of your life" and Gyan admitted that "just to maintain some sort of family relationship I had to abide by their rules". Geena also believed that "you kind of got to lead this perfect life, you're not supposed to make mistakes as a woman, you're not supposed to challenge, you're not supposed to have a mind of your own necessarily". Payal said "we're told what to do and what not to do, we don't have that choice, so therefore there is no mistakes there is no room for a mistakes".

Payal struggled with the fact that the story of her life was not up to her:

> "I want to live for myself, I want to be able to travel, I want to be able to be a career oriented woman, I want to be able to do that considering I think, I believe, I've worked so hard at getting a degree, you know, that I want to be able to utilize it and not just be that standard for immigrant parents where all a girl is good for is washing dishes and continuing the family norm within her in-laws' family".

She went on to say, "It's like my story is already written for me and I don't want to live with that story that my parents want for me, that's a conflict".

If conflict led to punishment, Geena noted that "the punishment [was] definitely more serious. I probably would've been instantly put on a tight leash. Forgiveness would have been a lot harder for my parents. Feeling, you know, having the feeling from your parents that you've dishonoured them". Serena disclosed that her parents "say that 'I'll kill you or send you to India'...they're not gonna to kill you...my dad's not a murderer; he's just a psycho brown guy".

Geena talked about challenging the suppression:

> "If you can have your parents believe that they've got control over you they will continue to hold that control, but if you challenge it and you don't give in to their threats or whatever, they're nagging or yelling, and it's also individual parents right, some parents might not back down and actually kick you out of the house versus others who might just try taking something away. I remember they took my car away and said I wasn't allowed to leave the house and I still did it, and I think that's what it is, I think if you continue challenging them, some of them will eventually realize, 'okay you know what, we were gonna lose the control at one point, we're losing it'. And I think that's sick, and who would want to control somebody that much?"

Fear of judgment.

Many women spoke about having an immense fear of judgment reportedly created by the Sikh community. Vaani stated "that it can be just from your appearance, to how you dress, to how you, I don't know, how you interact with people, all of that. So you could have cut and dyed the wrong way and they'd look at you all funny". Donna provided another example, "Let's say [you] get drunk at a reception, an East Indian reception...that'd be bad.

Like reputation wise, respect wise. Reputation is a big thing for East Indians, if your reputation goes down everything goes down...it's basically the whole family's [reputation]". Basically, Serena said "we've been brainwashed with reputation right, so we're already afraid of that". Gyan admitted to being "labeled like as a bad girl because I did all the things that we weren't supposed to do...things like cutting my hair, talking to boys, drinking".

Geena commented on how parents' fear for their daughters can affect the family's reputation:

> "Well any parent's fear would be a daughter being hurt or being impregnated. Making the wrong choices and making mistakes that's irreversible, but I think for East Indian parents even more so it's a thing of a shame, dishonour, a lot to do with what the community is going to perceive, it's all about perception rather than accepting the fact that every child out there wants to do it and enabling it to happen".

Some women spoke about the fear from their in-laws. Donna found that with "parents and your husband you can say things or express how you feel and you won't be judged...[in-laws] will remember those things, so its better just to not say anything"; thus highlighting that a woman should only speak when spoken to.

Gender differences.

When it came to being raised as a daughter compared to a son in the Sikh community, many women painted an unfair picture. Payal reported:

> "The difference that I see is my brother has, gets to explore life, and he gets to live life to the fullest...where with me on the other hand it's a different story...It feels like all I was born to do is to just get married".

Serena stated that the eastern culture is "basically sexist".

Gyan, being an only daughter, talked about how her brothers:

> "were so much overprotective of me. They actually wouldn't let me do anything either... they were siding with my mom and dad that East Indian girls don't do this, so it actually made it more difficult. I think if I had sisters it might have been a more

of a united front, but having brothers there wasn't even anything I could sneak around and do because I would have gotten busted by them".

Geena also spoke about a similar experience:

"One thing that really bothered me, [my brother] tended to try to play the parental role, the father role, which was probably one of the things that irritated me the most growing up. He was able to make decisions for me or was able to dictate my parents...a man in my parents' eyes is still placed on such a high pedestal".

Donna believed:

"East Indian girls are expected to be proper, prim and proper you know, basically do, how can I put it, basically know all your housework right. Attend to the husband, you can say right – do all those things. Care for everyone – for the family, the children, and let your husband kind of enjoy the other part of it. You're supposed to sit back and kind of watch things but not do them...and that's tough".

Geena elaborated by stating that "[men are] taught that they are the family head, they make the decisions, a woman conforms to them, a woman doesn't have a mind of her own".

When comparing expectations, Vaani stated that:

"What's expected of daughter-in-laws, what's expected of daughters, is different than what's expected from guys. You're not supposed to rebel, you're not supposed to have problems, you're supposed to be a good mother, a good wife, and now also go out there and work. So they still kinda of expect all the Sikh cultural things to stay there as well as learn all the Canadian things too now and go do those too".

Being of a small community.

Living in Prince George and being part of a small Sikh community proved to have its own complications, according to many of the women interviewed. Geena noted:

"In terms of a small community even versus say a large community [it is] harder definitely. The parents are even more old school. I would say in a way, in a smaller community, you're well known. If you're Sikh you're well known within the community, everybody knows one another, everybody knows what's going on each other's lives so it's even a bigger deal to not do the wrong thing".

Tara commented that "in a small community, lots of people know you...whose daughter you are...and sometimes you want to be in a bigger town because you think you have more freedom".

Vaani described "definitely in a small community you have to watch the eyes watching you. So you really have to be on your guard, especially as a female in a small community". Donna reiterated something similar, "You're constantly watched, every move you do and I think people are waiting for someone to slip up and then talk", believing that the community "[doesn't] let you be what you are...they hold back from who you really are".

Geena said that "being in a small community the biggest label is being the talk of the town, being the worst child. No parent in a small community wants their family or their children to be labeled the worst children in the community". Serena provided an example of how easy it was to get this "label":

> "Two years ago I had a boyfriend and he was white and my dad's friend, who is East Indian, ratted me out because he lived on the same street so he told my dad and then my dad took me in my car and he drove by the house and he's like 'who lives there?'. But all my dad's friend told him was he seen my car there a lot. I got in a lot of trouble. [My dad and I] didn't talk for like six months. He wouldn't even look at me and he told me I was such an embarrassment".

Some women spoke about the racism they experienced in a small community. Aman says:

> "Growing up here, being in a small town and everything, I was encountered with a lot of racism...being called a Hindu and just brownie and whatever the case – name callings. I remember this one time and I was looking at perfumes and I was there for a long time, and I was the only one there and then all of a sudden, nobody asked me if I needed help or anything like that, and all of a sudden all these other people come around and [the sales representative] is all helpful towards them and I was just like, I'm the one who's gonna buy it, you know. So I mean it's just little things like that".

Payal said, "within a small community, especially being a daughter, it feels like as if not only do you have to please your parents but you also have a standard upon the

community". She indicated that "as much as every parent doesn't want to admit it, but it's almost as if there's a competition amongst who's better and who's not, especially with immigrant families because they're not as willing to break their norms".

Having immigrant parents.

Some women highlighted the impact of being raised in the west by eastern immigrant parents. Tara reported that:

> "There's lots of immigrant parents in Prince George, and they all have the same thoughts and expectations and so because everybody thinks the same you're expected to be sort of like them...if you stand out in a bad way then everybody knows, like the dating things all bad, girls that go out, or whatever, it's all bad".

Payal felt "influenced by parents [her] parents [and] my parents are influenced by the community".

Geena spoke about the effects of having immigrant parents who lack education:

> "Having illiterate parents meant they're even more backwards because they're unable to learn the culture, the Western culture. I think you can learn a lot from experience but a lot of it has to do with comprehending something and without formal education, like it's proven, I mean if you have a low formal education its harder to grasp ideas or whatever right, and my parents had low education in India and not even English, neither one them had English education right, so they're not able to grasp the culture...that made it even harder for me".

A couple of women indicated possible struggles their parents may have endured as immigrants, in turn affecting their lived experiences. Tara mentioned that "Immigrants...they all maintain that togetherness because they were minority and I guess they did need each other's support". Gyan also believed that because her "dad was one of the first ones here...he experienced a lot of discrimination and maybe that's what impacted him". She thought that "maybe that's what prevented him from allowing us to be a part of a culture that treated him so badly".

Psychological factors

Psychological or behavioural factors contributed to each woman's unique lived experience. There was significant evidence showing that these women were isolated, had to modify their existence depending on their environment, struggled to balance the different cultural influences, and were self-conscious.

Isolated.

"I think girls need to let loose and they're not allowed" said Donna. Gyan mentioned:

> "my biggest thing was being able to go to the sock hop (dance) and I wasn't able to, you know, and that really bugged me. Because in our society, when I was growing up we weren't allowed to. We weren't allowed to hang out with boys, we weren't allowed to cut our hair, we weren't allowed to wear shorts and dresses so when I cut my hair, my dad lost it, and I never wore shorts in front of my dad. Even like being in school and everybody else has lots and lots of clothing and I never did because my parents didn't feel that was important right, so I pretty much wore the same one or two outfits every day and I got bugged for that".

Gyan also shared:

> "I wasn't allowed to be on the sports team because you can't go away to any events. Even like striving to get really good grades, like I got the grades but my dad said that I can't go off to university, so what was the point right? Even working, I had to fight a long time just to be able to get a job. My dad would not let me work because then I would mix with boys. I'd be out there in the public and his whole image, for him in particular, it was he did not want his wife and daughter working because that also portrayed the fact that we didn't have enough money to live".

Many women felt isolated "in terms of going out, curfews, not being allowed to go to parties...never openly dated in front of my parents or consumed alcohol...I was in a relationship where I was lying to get out of the house" noted Geena. Serena could relate to lying:

> "The only thing I can do is just lie all the time. I use school a lot because I have a boyfriend and he's white, and so I used to lie a lot. In high school it was basketball; I always used to say I had basketball practice and I'd go and I'd hang out with him, and now it's ever since last year I wouldn't come home until around 11:00, so I slowly

> made it into a routine that they thought school ended at 11:00 and then I'd go home or I'd say I have a study group".

If caught, Serena said "you're not allowed to leave...you're always at home...I wasn't even allowed to come to school; I missed like a week of school until [my parents] let me come back". While lying helps young women have some control over their own "freedom", it also helps them negotiate their reputations. They are able to have some control over their reputations at home and school by lying. While the emotional cost of "living lies" is extremely high for these young women, honesty would involve paying an even higher price.

"It was like those unspoken rules...like you just knew those were expectations" Aman noted. Tara described being isolated during social gatherings:

> "I went to a stagette the other weekend and there was tons of drinking, they started drinking from 7 and they just kept going and going and they're like, 'oh "Tara" you want some?'. I was like 'no'. 'We're gonna have a shot, you want some?'. I had to leave because it gets too much and like you want to have fun with everybody else but yet you're bound down by your, by the culture. Western society it's acceptable but culturally it would not be acceptable so it affects your socializing".

Donna said, "being a Sikh you kind of do hold back, the women do".

Modifying existence.

Many women talked about how they had to basically change the way they lived depending on the situation or environment they were in. The concept of situational ethnicity, as discussed earlier, parallels this mode of existence. Aman described:

> "When I'm out of the house I become a different person...it was like when I was out of the house it was more, I felt more like everyone else, but once I stepped into the house it was like, I was in little India again".

Donna said, "being with the party girls you're trying to be the partier and if you're trying to be the civilized traditional girl at the Gurudwara or at a big family function, then you change and you try to be that".

Vaani described this lived experience as:

> "almost like having a split personality because you totally convert to the Sikh culture – you know you're dressed up that way, you're listening to that type of music, you're doing that kind of dance moves, and then the opposite if you were to go to a Western party".

Serena described, "It is like living two lives right. At home I'm one person and the second I leave I turn into a brown little white girl".

Struggle to balance.

Inevitably, it was found that the women had difficulty with trying to balance their different cultural influences. "It's just hard finding that middle ground" said Tara. Payal said "To live life for a Sikh daughter [my parents] have Indian and I have my Canadian morals and trying to mesh the two together is asking for conflict in one way or another". Tara mentioned "independence and speaking up for yourself and getting what you want, it wasn't really accepted. Whereas culturally or in Western ways it is, like you're expected to stand up for yourself and achieve what you want to".

Donna shared:

> "You're kinda stuck in between an East Indian and Canadian, just from being born and raised here you're expected to know everything as a Sikh and as the rules right being the East Indian girl – be good, don't go out and party...And then on the Western side of it you're like, oh I should be doing all those things cuz I'm here right".

Geena also felt "torn between expectations of each culture". She believed that "you could be a 30 year old Sikh woman who still finds it difficult to say no to attending a Rave...or traveling alone with girlfriends".

When it comes to things like dating, Aman said "we're not supposed to be dating but in the Western culture dating is such a norm right". When it came to living at home, Aman mentioned that her parents indicated:

> "You're staying here until you're married. Like why would you want to be out there living on your own and working hard and stuff when you're here, you're provided with food and shelter and everything and it's easier on you. I don't know, I guess that's a good thing when it comes to finances, I'm saving money. But at the same time I feel like moving out just because, it's kind of like, you do want to do your own thing at the same time, and you do want to live your own life, be more independent; but then you think 'okay well this is helping me out, it's not like it's bringing me down in any way really'. So it just comes down to I start feeling selfish then I think about my parents...because they would be devastated if I moved out".

Self-conscious.

Some women commented on how they would feel self-conscious or embarrassed mixing cultures. Aman mentioned:

> "when I was younger, like in elementary school and stuff, I used to actually be kind of embarrassed...my parents, they tried to teach us a lot about the Indian culture and stuff and in the beginning my dad wanted me to wear Indian suits at home, so it was kind of embarrassing if my friend or something saw me in one."

She went on to say, "I used to be frustrated at myself because...why is it that I was feeling embarrassed? Why is it I can't be the way I am at home and be proud of it when I step out of the house too?".

Payal also had similar thoughts:

> "I wouldn't wear a suit to university. I think I, to be honest, as much as it's something that I should be proud of, like a cultural thing, it's probably more of a self-conscious, a personal thing where I feel, where I'm more proud of my culture when I'm within my cultural people...I still should be proud, it doesn't matter you know because this is who I am, but when I'm among Western people it's a different story, I feel like I'm getting looked at twice".

Tara also said:

> "when you go out into society, like especially in a small community, there's the majority of white people...like down in Surrey or whatever you can feel comfortable going in a suit right, your Indian outfit, but like here...you just don't do it because I don't feel comfortable because I think the whites, *gorays* [white people in Punjabi], are going to be like, oh what is she doing?".

Serena spoke about her experience dating a white male:

> "Friends view my parents as racist because they won't let me date him, and so that's kind of a part of being a Sikh I'm embarrassed of. Like if someone will invite me out and I'll tell them 'no', and then they'll say 'why?'. I won't sit there and tell them my whole life story,' like oh I can't do this, I can't sneak out'. But some people know and they'll be like 'oh cuz of your parents?', and then it's kind of embarrassing, 'yeah I'm 19, it's because of my parents'".

Emotional effects

The interviewed women experienced many mixed emotions. Some of those emotions included: feeling misunderstood by the different cultures, confusion, anger, anxiousness, and pressured to fit in or abide by the various expectations.

Misunderstood.

Many women spoke about feeling misunderstood, either by the Sikh community or by the Western society. Vaani "feel[s] more comfortable with Eastern friends...Sikh people instead of *goray*". When asked for what reasons, Vaani said, "I think cuz they can understand you better. So if you decide to make a choice that's not exactly Westernized they can understand where you're coming from".

Being misunderstood also affected socializing for some women. Gyan said the western culture "would never have understood [me] so in that sense I didn't have many friends growing up because you just get tired of [explaining] and I pretty much became a loner". Serena illustrated:

> "From the Western community it's like, '"Serena" you're 19, you can do what you want'; but they don't get it. Because I'm 19 doesn't mean I can do what I want because my parents pay for school, they bought me a car, I live at home, and they think that because I'm 19 I should still get to go and do whatever I want, but still stay at home and have all that".

Serena indicated that her friends along with her family "will never get it". She said:

> "Lots of people just don't think it's a big deal, us being depressed over not being able to go out. Every time I've gotten caught I've always said I want freedom and then they use, 'oh you don't even know how much freedom you have', like they always say that but they don't get what we mean by freedom. Like our freedom is being

> normal. The definition of normal is really different because being normal is being 19 years old and not having to ask your parents if you can run to Save On. One time I was like 'I'm going to Save On' and my dad gets up and comes to the door...and he's like, 'why are you going there?' I go 'well what do you do at Save On?'".

Confused.

"You're stuck in the middle. The certain views you have are like Sikh and some views you have are Western, and sometimes you don't know what's right or wrong" said Donna. Tara also mimics Donna's state of confusion:

> "Well sometimes it can be frustrating right, like because you don't know what to do, like you know that culturally your parents or whatever they're like telling you what's acceptable and what they expect from you and, on the other hand like you know that Western society expect something different and that just sometimes becomes frustrating and you don't know what to do".

Geena is confused when it comes to being raised alongside her brother. "Growing up the biggest word I could probably use was unfair. Everything just was unfair and when you're being raised next to your brother and seeing the inequality but learning about equality in school, it doesn't make sense".

Gyan commented on how confused she felt growing up:

> "It's like you grow up without a personality because you're so caught in the confusion of who should I be, you know at school you wanted to be so Westernized and when you got home you had to be such a dipper and do the dipper cooking and the dipper cleaning and can't go anywhere you're stuck at home watching tv, so you didn't know who, what your personality was".

Angry.

"It's a constant battle of the things that you want to do, wanted to do and couldn't do, and knew you couldn't do it, and it just caused a lot of anger. I think I grew up very angry" Gyan mentioned. Serena commented on how the community angered her:

> "The gossip and how fast something gets around...you try like going out, like even to the mall, someone will see you and someone will say something. Like one time in high school me and my friend had a basketball game...and we walked over to the

> mall and the next day her mom was like, 'where were you going?' We're just walking, two girls...people don't mind their own business".

Vaani also spoke about the gossip, "You hate it so much, you lived with it growing up and East Indians always...have to know about what's going on with East Indians".

Anxious.

> "You have to hide so much...everything was a secret. You just lived with this constant fear all the time that you were gonna get caught. You were not living in the moment. You were always looking over your shoulder to when you were gonna get caught".

Donna also spoke about her anxiousness, "You're worried about how people are going to perceive [you] and I think that is a big thing in Sikhism". She continued by stating:

> "that you're constantly worrying...even if someone comes over for tea right, you have to be prim and proper, you're doing the proper things for everyone, even though you get along with them fine, but there's a way you have to do things. And even if they go you're like, 'I hope I didn't say anything wrong' so you worry constantly about things...You don't want to disappoint anyone".

"You almost have like a conscience reminding you all the time, well you shouldn't have done that, or you shouldn't really do that" said Vaani. Geena said the "dishonour, disrespect for your elders, bringing shame on your family" kept her anxious.

Pressured.

The women experienced immense pressure from living with a mixture of cultural influences. "I don't think we East Indian ladies, Canadian-born Sikh girls, I don't think we know how much pressure we're under...I don't think anyone lets you kind of breathe" said Donna. Geena reported:

> "It can add that additional stress and pressure to conform one way...old traditions versus experience...I think it's sacrifice, I would say that's a big thing, throughout your life you have to sacrifice what you believe is gonna be fun or you want to experience".

Many women spoke about the pressure to get married. Aman said "when it comes to like marriage and stuff [my parents] are more like I'm 25 right now .... I should be married, I should be almost thinking about having kids". Gyan also had a similar experience:

> "All [my parents] wanted for me to do is to get married as soon as I turned 18 and graduated from high school they took me to India...they started introducing me to guys when I wasn't even out of high school yet".

Knowing how to cook was another pressure mentioned. "My mom expects me to know how to cook because she's always throwing in my face, like 'what are your in-laws gonna say?'" noted Aman. Gyan elaborated on the in-law pressures:

> "So much is expected out of us right, no one ever tells us that, okay when you get married you have to do this and this and this, it's just you watch your mom and how she was and you're just expected to be the same way and if you're not, you're afraid that you're gonna get judged. It's not like your mother-in-law is gonna say, oh you got up at 10:05 that's so bad...the expectations are unsaid".

Payal indicated that when she is married, "I have to watch what I do [because]...I'm representing somebody's daughter-in-law or wife and that is more of a burden, where their expectations are higher...they have, want the perfect image, the perfect daughter-in-law".

Positive attitudes and beliefs

The women mentioned positive attitudes and beliefs from living with a mixture of cultural influences. They included many significant cultural values and feeling proud and unique as a result of their experiences. Both Eastern and Western values and traditions were emphasized by the women.

Cultural values.

"Being born East Indian it makes me a lot more family oriented. You're wanting to keep your family together" noted Gyan. When it came to family values many women spoke

about the instilled "togetherness". Geena said "I couldn't ever think of putting mom or dad away in a home you know and I think, I value that about Sikh families".

The religion, Sikhism, was seen as a fundamental value for some women. Geena said, "the religion is basically my framework, the groundwork of me". Gyan said:

> "I like the religion part of it too you know because I feel that I'm a lot more spiritual because of being an East Indian right. I don't know much about the Western religions but I like our Sikhism...And I feel good when I go to the Gurudwara and I feel good when we pray and I totally believe in that, so I'm thankful to my parents for raising me with a strong religious belief".

Many women spoke about carrying on specific Sikh traditions. "I would like to carry, like the wedding ceremonies and stuff, I'd still want to carry that on, um all the cooking, the food I want to carry that on too" said Aman. Language was another important cultural value. Aman also noted:

> "I want to carry [language] on definitely because my mom doesn't speak much English at all and having my children speaking English all the time, they would never be able to communicate well right, so and I don't want that. I want them to have good communications and relationships".

Vaani also said that "having that second language and sometimes it becomes like a third language. I think that's really beneficial to have".

Respect was highly spoken about. "I learned a lot from Sikhism with respect". "Having respect for your parents and your elders". Vaani agreed that, "respecting your elders is a big thing".

Cultural values from western influences were also expressed. Things like, "being a strong independent woman...being career oriented...being an equal to a man" noted Geena. Tara said in the "Western society like education is a real big thing". Vaani spoke about the Western values she hoped for her children. "What I want them to adopt from the Western culture is more equality with males and females. So I don't want them as girls to grow up

and think that they're inferior to men. They have an equal chance, like boys and girls are the same and they shouldn't feel like they're not". Tara stated that the West benefits Sikh women by "just giving us a voice".

Feeling proud and unique.

The women interviewed shared a sense of pride as a result of living with Eastern and Western cultural influences. Gyan said:

> "You grow up confused, you grow up angry, you grow up resentful...you grow up worried, you grow up scared...and yet at the same time, when you're at the temple and stuff like that you grow up feeling proud. When you are at home you feel proud because you just feel like you have it so much better than other people do".

Many women appreciated being able to experience a mixed life. Geena said "you get to basically live two cultures". Vaani talked about taking the best of both worlds:

> "I think it's nice because then you can chose what you want to do because you're not set in the one way of doing everything. So you can choose even in the Western culture, you can choose to do something that's from Sikh background and even in the Sikh background then you can mix up Western stuff. I think it makes a wider range of things you can do. Like if you go to the Gurudwara, you can wear a suit and some of the girls will be wearing pants...and even food wise. You can choose Indian or you can choose Western".

Geena also saw the benefits of having different cultural influences:

> "It can make you stronger because you can take from both cultures and I think I have more of a sense of belonging from my Indian culture because deep down, regardless of being raised in Western society, I am a Sikh Indo Canadian person right. So that's who I am, but what I've kind of developed in to has been influenced by Western culture. But my groundwork, like my religion, my family, a lot of the way my relationships are or have begun have more so been dictated from the old culture and changed according to what I've learned along the way".

Serena indicated that "You see life in a different perspective like you see it from both sides and it's good because it just makes you more open minded and stronger as a person".

It was important for me to capture the voices of eight amazing Canadian-born Sikh women, their lived experiences, and their realities. This invaluable information shares the

voices of Sikh women and sheds light on their trials and tribulations of being a product of different worlds. All of the Sikh women courageously shared their stories. Although each woman has a unique experience, it was profound to witness every single woman speak to significant issues related to being part of a small Sikh community – feeling pressured and isolated, yet living with a sense of pride and strength.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The first-generation Canadian-born Sikh women face differing values and cultures and are adapting, accommodating, and continually changing behavioural patterns to be part this mixture of cultures. Perhaps the most fundamental and useful categorization revealed here was that of the cultural "chameleon" (Vaani, 2008). Moving towards Westernization in one step and towards traditional Indian in another step, acculturated South Asian immigrants or Canadian-born South Asians are continuously interacting with recent immigrants, leading to a kind of forwards-backward interacting clash (O'Connell, 2000). It could be argued that they are moving their cultural identity forward to the extent that both cultures were fusing and developing into a new "woman-made" culture of their own (Sekhon & Szmigin, 2005).

The Sikh women in this study found negotiating an identity that is meaningful and representative of their lives a difficult task. Each of the multiple cultures that infiltrates and affects their lives has an influence on shaping their identities. Some of the cultural influences are conflicting and others are more complementary. The in-between struggles of these women's lives are evident in practical and conceptual realms: in-between Canadian and Sikh, tradition and modernity, religious and secular, selfishness and guilt, family and individual, home and distance (emotional and geographical), reproduction and resistance, marriage and education, romantic love and arranged marriage, experience and contamination, writing and the written. Their experience of "self", in this sense, is very fragmented, a constant pulling on and off of masks and negotiating of "expected" roles, depending on the context. They expressed both a desire to meet and break out of these "expectations".

Limitations

This study does present limitations. It was done as a 'snapshot' – in a particular place and time with a specific group of eight people. Different results may have been obtained if eight different people were selected at another time. The nature of this study is that it is focused on context. For that reason, the ability to generalize past this particular case may be limited.

As a result of limitation of time and resources, this investigation focuses only on a small group of selected members of the Sikh woman's community. With the assessment focusing on a small number of community members, it is difficult to generalize about all their issues pertinent to either the Sikh immigrant community or to other members of the South Asian community. Despite the limitations, this investigation will still provide needed insights into the lived experiences of Canadian-born Sikh daughters.

More depth could have been added to this study if it had inquired more into issues of religion and ethnicity. For example, if it had explored what being a Sikh meant to these women and for these women.

Suggestions

As this study was a 'snapshot' of a particular point in time, where it spoke with the first generation Canadian-born Sikh daughters, a longitudinal study of the same or similar community would be valuable. How do opinions and outlooks differ over time? Also, as many of the participants in this study had young children, a similar study focused on their children once they reach their 20s would be fascinating.

It would be interesting to investigate the views of the parents of these women concerning the challenges of raising their Canadian-born Sikh children in Western society

and the differences between raising a female versus male child. It is important to understand how the parents of children raised in Canada were socialized about the role of women in Indian cultures. Most parents (aged 40 to 70 years) spent the majority of their lives in India, where the cultures are quite distinct from the Western culture in which they are raising their children.

This study hopes to provide a starting point to understand the familial and societal needs of this community through selection of a small, rather homogenous sample. Future replication studies may help to extend these results and further uncover, define, and revise the current findings.

It would also be fascinating to learn more about the perception of Canadian-born Sikh sons living in Prince George to gain a better understanding of their expectations as undoubtedly they would be faced by many of their own unique experiences.

For Further Exploration

The potential significance of this work is considerable in terms of its importance to the South Asian Canadian community, mainstream society, and academia. The ultimate goal is to create awareness within and beyond the Sikh community with respect to the present realities of first-generation Sikh women and the challenges they have and continue to endure. The ultimate goal is to provoke continued dialogue, informed discussion, as well as inspire further research in the area of Sikh studies in Canada.

This work strives to provide a forum whereby issues of concern for this population can be articulated and perhaps inspire further research in this intriguing field of study. As a Canadian-born Sikh employed in the social services field, this study opened up curiosity to find out what holds most Sikhs back from accessing support, wondering what current

counselling organizations might be doing that perhaps is not working for this population. These ideas were not explored in this research; therefore, further research is still needed to better understand the clinical needs of this growing community in Canada.

Final Thoughts

With this knowledge it is my hope that the journey for those between mixed cultures becomes easier. Although, not easy, it is possible to shuttle between these worlds. I can say that it has been a blessing to document and recognize the experiences of Sikh women living in Prince George.

This study aspired to provide pertinent information for the social work discipline and its service providers whose intervention(s) may cross paths with first-generation Sikh women and/or their immigrant families. This research will be helpful in providing quality service for individuals and also assist social service agencies plan relevant service with heightened knowledge of Sikh women's real life experiences and their unique cultural beliefs. As a professional, it is essential to consider service based on their clients' needs and values. It is important to gain such firsthand information so that we may better understand and make changes that are based on valid research data, and not merely on what we believe to be the best approach – making culturally competent professionals.

As the immigrant population in Canada increases, studies such as this are useful in dealing with families and children caught between opposing cultures. Issues such as friendships between boys and girls, dating, and individual freedom that are often taken for granted in Western society can cause great stress in the lives of immigrant families. Deepening everyone's awareness of these issues is important. Also, front-line workers in the social service field need to be aware of subtle rules of the culture when carrying out their

duties. For instance, it is common to encourage individuals in troubled situations to express their anger or frustration towards the cause of their problems; however, Sikh women may have an extremely difficult time with this suggestion as it goes against everything she was raised to believe (Sharma, 2003). In this instance knowledge about the culture would help the workers find ways of dealing with the situation without suggesting that the women disrespect their traditions.

Understanding the intersection of gender and race may be crucial, especially in situations involving wife battering or a suicidal teenage daughter struggling with pressures from family, community, and mainstream society. Ultimately, these women can be pictured standing on a bridge between two worlds, rejecting and loving, frightened and hopeful, screaming and praying, taking steps back and forth, learning to choose how much to change and how much to stay the same. They are learning to take care of themselves.

They do not just juggle situations between East and West but rather juggle life continuously, sometimes integrating and acculturating and other times deliberately alienating and identifying with one's ethnicity for a sense of belonging and identity. Integrating Western and Eastern values and negotiating their identities has become a part of their day-to-day lives. This study can be a helpful source for young women experiencing a conflict between mixed cultures and not knowing if they are alone in their feelings.

Through the radical teachings of Guru Nanak and in a short period of time, Sikh women broke the shackles of subjugation and became the temporal and spiritual supporters of men, and in some cases, even their leaders. Sikh women have played a glorious part in history, and examples of their moral dignity, service, sense of duty, self-sacrifice, and persistence will remain a source of inspiration forever. However, by and large in an alleged

authentic Sikh social setup, it is very disappointing to see mostly men dominate the political, intellectual, academic, and spiritual scene with women serving in the background, if at all. A conventional Sikh woman plays the traditional role of mother, daughter, wife and sister very well, but her creative potential to nurture the universal consciousness and her spiritual creativity still remain largely untapped.

To do justice to Guru Nanak's vision we must restore the lost equality, liberty, and justice given to women some 500 years ago by bringing marginalized, silenced, and different voices into dominant discourse where they are heard. It is then her duty as a Sikh woman, on the path of consciousness, to think she is free, that she equal, and that she is responsible. Without Sikh women knowing who they are, doubts and negativity in the form of subservience and inferiority are bound to result. Empowerment is the key, the key to being capable, knowledgeable, and powerful. Only then can Sikh women lead the next generation.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Are you born in Canada?

Are you a woman over the age of 19?

Are you Sikh?

Are your parents immigrants from India?

If you can answer **"yes"** to all of these questions,

I would love to hear from **you**!

My name is Paula and I am interviewing these women as a part of my **research study** through the **University of Northern British Columbia**.

Please **contact** me for more information at:

Cell: (250) 981-4512

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What cultural influences / expectations impact your life from home?

2. What cultural influences / expectations impact your life from Western Society?

3. How do you balance these influences?

4. What is it like for you being a Sikh Canadian born daughter of immigrant parents in a small community?

5. What do you find difficult living with more than one cultural influence?

6. What are the benefits of living with more than one cultural influence?

7. In what ways do you believe living with more than one cultural influence affects your mental health / well being?

8. With who or where do you access support to maintain mental health / well being?

Appendix C: Information & Consent Form to Participant in Research

INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Inderpal (Paula) Kaur Sandhu, from the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Results of this study will contribute to the research thesis.

You were identified as a possible volunteer in this study because of your response to an advertised research participant recruitment poster or you were recommended to contact the investigator by an informant.

Purpose of the Study

To explore the specific and general cultural variables that affect the lived experience and mental health of Canadian-born daughters of Sikh immigrant parents, whose cultural background could be described as a mixture of the home and host country.

Procedures and Activities

An interview will aim to explore your lived experience of having two cultural influences – Canadian and Sikh. The interview will be for approximately one hour and will be audio taped.

The taped interview will be transcribed by the researcher. The transcription will then be entered into a word processing program for further reading and analysis.

You will not receive payment or other incentives for your participation in this study. For feedback or to obtain a copy of the research results, leave your mailing address at the bottom of this form.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Recognizing that disclosure may create sensitivity, the researcher will provide information of service providers for debriefing and counselling, if necessary.

Potential Benefits to Participants and/or to Society

The benefits of research are hoped for participants to have a voice in respect to their lived experiences and to shed light on the potential struggles and/or advantages of being a product of two worlds. There is potential for associated groups to be appropriately represented and the advancement of knowledge, specifically for Northern British Columbia service provision.

Confidentiality

You are assured that no information collected will be reported to anyone outside of the researcher and their direct supervisory committee.

A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. Pseudonyms create confidentiality but the data is still potentially identifiable. Confidentiality will be guaranteed; however, since the Sikh community is fairly small in Prince George, anonymity cannot be guaranteed because there is the possibility that you could be identified.

Data collected will be secured in a locked office at the University of Northern British Columbia with the Social Work Program. All data, taped and written materials, will be destroyed by May 2011.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable.

Tape recording can be turned off if you prefer to exclude a segment.

You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point. If you choose to withdraw, your information will be withdrawn as well.

Identification of Investigators and Review Board

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Researcher: Inderpal (Paula) K. Sandhu, BSW
University of Northern British Columbia
3333 University Way, Prince George, BC
V2N 4Z9
Phone: 250-981-4512
E-mail:sandhui@unbc.ca

Supervisor: Si Transken, PhD, RSW
University of Northern British Columbia
3333 University Way, Prince George, BC
V2N 4Z9

Phone: 250-564-4753
E-mail: sit@unbc.ca

If you have other complaints or concerns, contact the University of Northern British Columbia, Office of Research at (250) 960-5820 or by email: reb@unbc.ca

Signature of Research Participant

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study and am nineteen-years-of-age or older. I have been provided a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Investigator

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly providing informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_____
Name of Investigator

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator Date