Intergenerational Conflict and Strategies of Resistance: A Study of Young Punjabi Sikh Women in the Canadian Context

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines intergenerational conflict found in the experiences of eleven second-generation Punjabi Sikh women living in the Canadian context. Traditional research on intergenerational conflict is criticized for its portrayal of immigrant youth of ethnic minority backgrounds as passive victims, caught "between" the cultures of their parents' country of origin and that of their new home. Existing research is also criticized for its neglect of the lived experiences of such individuals.

Borrowing from the theoretical and methodological perspective of symbolic interactionism, with its emphasis on meanings and insights on self and identity as social processes, this research departs from traditional research and instead portrays women as active agents and negotiators of their social worlds. To gain an understanding of the everyday lived experiences of young Punjabi Sikh women and their interpretations of these experiences, in-depth interviews in the form of relatively free-flowing conversations were used.

The findings reveal that parents attempt to maintain control over their daughters by threatening them, drawing upon the cultural resource of love and/or justifying their actions in the name of protecting their daughters from malicious gossip. The operating vocabulary for parents is one of honour and tradition and social control by the group. In contrast, the operating vocabulary for the young women is that of independence and rights. The women's frame of reference is primarily that of their peer groups and the broader "Canadian" society. In general, the findings indicate that the women's lives are

characterized by contradictions which they attempt to resolve by adopting various strategies, from leading "secret" lives to the attempting of suicide.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the special people in my life.

To my mother and best friend, Satwant Kaur Mann, for all her love and patience.

To my husband, Paul Kahalma, my love, my life, my Ji, for believing in me.

You are both an inspiration in my life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Beginning

I would like to begin with what I think is an obvious and yet personal question: What is my research about? To answer this question, I must begin with an account of how I came to focus on the topic that I did.

This research is closely tied in to my own personal experiences; the experiences I have had while growing up as a second generation Punjabi Sikh[1] woman in Canada. I have always felt like I did not belong or fit in with any one cultural group; whether this was the East Indian culture of my parents or the larger "Canadian" culture. Sometimes, in certain circumstances, the choice was made easy. For example, when on the receiving end of racist attacks and remarks, I knew which culture I did not belong to. Anyway, while I was growing up, I realized that I was not alone. Other Punjabi Sikh girls were facing similar problems and having the same types of dilemmas that I was. I also observed that many of the girls seemed to lead almost "secret" lives. They would engage in activities and behaviours that their parents were unaware of. For example, many young people would date but covertly. Dating is still not accepted widely by members of the Punjabi community.

My curiosity and need to understand this phenomenon of common experiences drove me to the academic literature. Upon reviewing the academic literature, I became

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[1] I use the term Punjabi Sikh here because while it is true that most Sikhs are Punjabis, not all Punjabis are Sikhs. Herein afterwards, when I use the term Sikhs, I will be referring to Sikhs who either originate from and/or identify with the geographical area known as Punjab in India, i.e. Punjabi Sikhs.

very distressed and almost felt "cheated" in some strange way. In the literature on South Asian immigrant families, this phenomenon of common experiences was given a name, "intergenerational conflict". The more I read about it, the more distress I experienced. It became apparent to me that no researcher had bothered to ask second generation-ers about their own **experiences**. This only fueled my drive to translate my personal experiences into a do-able research topic.

My research focusses on the experiences of second generation Punjabi Sikh women and portrays them as active agents of their social worlds. I believe that the portrayal of such young people as living "between" cultures by existing studies is an inaccurate one. These young people are not just some passive victims of a backwards and restrictive culture. As individuals, they make conscious decisions and actively participate and construct their social realities. I argue that the notion of intergenerational conflict, of Traditional vs. Western and even the notion of culture, all need to be problematized with respect to gender, identity, power and sacred symbols.

The Sociological Problem: Intergenerational Conflict

The literature on overseas South Asian[2] immigrant families is predominantly characterized by a "cultural conflict" perspective. In this perspective, South Asian children of immigrant parents are caught "between" two cultures: the cultures of their parents' country of origin and that of their new home (Bhachu 1985; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil 1981; Watson 1977). Second generation South Asian children are represented as

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[2] The term "South Asian" is an inclusive term used to make reference to people who originate from or identify with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and/or Sri Lanka.

being "pulled" between conforming to the traditional practices and beliefs of their parents and their own desire to be "accepted" into mainstream Canadian society. Second generation South Asians apparently face the dilemma of deciding which particular sets of values and behaviours they should embrace, and how to balance the competing loyalties to their family and significant others such as peers. Researchers conclude that value conflicts lead to intergenerational conflict[3] within South Asian immigrant families.

In this context, intergenerational conflict is defined as "parent-children conflicts" (Kurian 1986: 41). However, the term is also used more specifically in the literature on South Asian immigrant families to refer to any overt and/or covert disagreements experienced by second generation children in regard to their first generation immigrant parents. Although intergenerational conflict is not exclusive to immigrant families, the literature suggests that the intergenerational conflict experienced by most immigrant families from minority ethnic or racialized backgrounds is **qualitatively** different from the intergenerational conflict experienced by mainstream families.

The existing academic research is problematic in two key respects. First, second generation South Asians are placed in an either/or framework. There is an assumption that second generation South Asians must choose one culture over the other for their own emotional/mental well-being. The possibility of such individuals peacefully co-existing between both cultures has been overlooked. A second related problem is that research has focussed exclusively on the quantification and enumeration of value differences

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[3] This term is also commonly used by academics (especially in the area of Ageing) to refer to the conflict that exists in the relationship between the elderly and their adult children.

between the two generations. In doing so, research has failed to provide an account of the lived **experiences** of such individuals. Thus, the notion of conflict has not been problematized, nor has research described **how** such conflict has been experienced, especially from the perspective of the younger generation. Moreover, despite the agreement that the South Asian culture is characterized by strong(er) traditional gender role preferences, (e.g. Dhruvarajan 1993) the existing research has either ignored or failed to explore why and how young women experience this conflict **differently** from young men.

This Thesis

In this thesis, I describe and analyze the everyday lived realities of second generation[4] Punjabi Sikh women in the Canadian context. I begin by asking, how do these young women make sense of the world? For example, do second generation Punjabi Sikh women live in "two cultures"? What is the nature of the conflict these young women experience, if any, and what strategies do second generation Punjabi Sikh women use to avoid tensions that arise when parents expect them as daughters to follow traditional female gender role scripts? What are the costs of these strategies to these young women themselves? How successful are these strategies, if at all? Do these women choose one culture over the other in specific social contexts? Are they passive victims of a "backwards" culture as the existing literature would lead us to believe?

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[4] This term refers to those who were either born in Canada or who migrated at a very young age to Canada (5 years or less).

To address these questions and the gaps in the existing literature, I draw upon insights developed within the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is the study of human behavior as human lived experience. Its main assumption is that human experience is rooted in people's meanings, interpretations, activities and interactions (Prus 1996: 9). Unlike typical psychological and social-structuralist explanations, meaning is attended to and seen as arising in the process of interaction between people and through a process of interpretation (Blumer 1969: 4-5). People are viewed as active agents who negotiate meaning through their interactions with other people. Symbolic interactionism's emphasis on meanings, and insights on identity and self as social processes, provides a suitable perspective for studying the self-conceptions of second generation Punjabi Sikh women living in Canadian society.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. This chapter introduced the research topic. Chapter 2 presents a discussion of the demographic background of the Punjabi Sikhs and an overview of previous sociological research on East Indian immigrant families in Canada. Chapter 3 reviews the literature specific to intergenerational conflict and includes an alternative theoretical framework for understanding this phenomenon. Chapter 4 discusses the research methods used. Chapter 5 looks at the accounts of how the women in this study give meaning to their everyday experiences. In analyzing these women's accounts, we see that they are not passive victims but are able to exercise some degree of control in their lives. Finally, chapter 6 includes the general conclusions and a discussion of the implications of the findings for future research on immigrant families.

CHAPTER 2 DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND AND GENERAL SURVEY RESEARCH

In this chapter, to familiarize the reader with Punjabi Sikhs as a distinct ethnoreligious group, I provide some general demographic background on this population. I outline the group's immigration history with respect to Canada and offer a brief discussion of religious beliefs and cultural practices. To illustrate the types of changes the Sikh family has undergone, I also provide an overview of general research findings on East Indian immigrants in Canada[5].

Sikhs: An Introduction

The word *Sikh* is the Punjabi word for "disciple", "follower", or "learner". The term was adopted by the followers of Guru Nanak, the fifteenth century founder of Sikhism. The ancestral homeland of the Sikhs is the state of Punjab[6] in northern India. Located in Punjab is the city of Amritsar, where the Golden Temple (*Harmander Sahib*), the holiest shrine of the Sikhs is located. Most of the world's Sikh population originated from Punjab at one point in time or another. With respect to out migration, it is estimated that in the villages of central Punjab, fully a third or more of the local population may reside abroad (Dusenbery 1989: 2). Currently, in Canada, it is estimated

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[5] I believe that Punjabi Sikhs are by and large a homogeneous group and do not differ significantly in comparison to other Indian groups. Thus in this thesis, I utilize research findings on Indians in general to make inferences about Punjabi Sikhs.

[6] The ancestral area of the Punjab referred to here was under the 1947 partition of India, absorbed into the state of Punjab and the nation of Pakistan. In 1966, this area of Punjab was further divided into the states of Haryana and what is now known as the present day state of Punjab in India.

that approximately 250,000 Sikhs live in British Columbia with a strong community of 80,000 living in the greater Vancouver area alone (Raj 1991: 27).

Immigration Overview

Official records of East Indian immigration to Canada date back to 1904. During this year, 2,124 Indian[7] immigrants were admitted into Canada. Another 5,000 were admitted between the years 1905 and 1908. The vast majority of these migrants came from the rural districts of Punjab in northern India and almost 95 percent of them were Sikhs (Basran 1993: 341). These early migrants consisted of single males who came to Canada seeking employment as manual workers. Their main purpose was to earn enough money and to eventually return to India.

In subsequent years, Indian immigration dropped drastically. The total number of Indians immigrating to Canada did not exceed eighty in any one year. This was the case from 1909 until 1949 and was largely due to discriminatory immigration policies (Mayer 1959). For example, according to the continuous journey stipulation of 1908, only immigrants who came to Canada by continuous journey from their home countries would be considered for admission to Canada. Because no ships made direct passage from Indian ports to Canada, this regulation, combined with the head tax of $200, effectively curtailed any further significant migration of Indians to Canada until the 1950s (Mayer 1959).

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[7] Throughout this thesis, I will be using the terms "Indian" and "East Indian" interchangeably.

During the 1950s, Indian immigration to Canada increased somewhat. In 1951, the Canadian government implemented the quota system which enabled no more than 150 Indians to immigrate to Canada. In 1957, this quota was raised to 300. However, it was not until the 1960s that a significant change occurred in Indian immigration.

By the mid 1960s, the national quota system was replaced by more liberal immigration laws. National origin restrictions were removed in 1962 and in 1967 and the point system was introduced. Under this system, points were allocated to potential immigrants based upon factors such as age, education, work experiences, occupational demand, skill, knowledge of English and French languages, and the ability to adapt in Canada. The point system "enabled non-white immigrants, who had traditionally been discriminated against in seeking entry to Canada, to be considered on the same grounds as white immigrants" (Basran 1993: 342). This change in immigration policy resulted in increased numbers of Indian immigrants being granted entry in Canada. This second wave of Indian migrants quickly established themselves across Canada. A large majority of them were Sikhs who chose to settle in British Columbia.

In terms of the various phases of immigration, Canadian Sikhs can be divided into four groups (Ames & Inglis 1973: 23). The early immigrants of the pre-World War 1 period who were few in number make up the first group. The second group consists of those immigrants who entered Canada in the 1920s and 1930s and are well into the third generation. The third group consists of post World War II migrants. This group is large and prosperous. Many of them immigrated during the 70s and 80s and dominate the leadership of the community. The final group is made up of the children of the adults of

the third group. They are increasing in number and "are often accused of contributing to stresses in the traditional social organization" (Srivastava 1974: 377).

The Sikh Religion

The Sikh faith developed out of the moulding influence of the ten *Gurus* (teachers) whose lives span a period of nearly two hundred years. The most famous of the Gurus are the founder Nanak Dev and the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, who instituted the Khalsa (pure ones). The Sikh faith is described as "a way of life which proclaims human equality, futility of caste, sex and race prejudice, fruitlessness of idol worship and discredits claim to God-ship" (Sindhu 1973: 53).

All Sikhs can be identified by their middle names. Traditionally, Sikhs who joined the Khalsa dropped their family names and took on the names, *Singh* (for males) and *Kaur* (for females). This was an effort made by the Gurus to eliminate caste distinctions. Today, many Sikhs continue to use these names but as middle names.

There are two types of Sikhs: those who have been baptized into the Khalsa and those who have not. Sikhs who have been baptized into the Khalsa (*amrit shuck*) adhere to the five Ks: keeping of uncut hair (*kesh*) in a headdress (turban), carrying a comb (*kangha*), carrying a sword (*kirpan*), wearing a steel wrist guard (*kara*), and wearing short breeches (*kachera*) at all times. Sikhs who have not been baptized do not adhere to the above and thus are not as easily identifiable from other religious groups. Many overseas Sikhs, especially families that have lived in the new country for more than one generation, including the young women in this study, belong to the latter category.

Sikh Women and The Family

The traditional Sikh family is an extended one in which several generations live in the same household. This often includes elderly parents, their married son(s) and daughter(s)-in-law, and any unmarried children (children of the elderly parents and/or their grand-children). Authority in the family is generally allocated according to age and gender, with males having greater authority than females (younger than them and within the same age category), while females have greater authority than males younger than themselves (Brah 1978: 197). In this respect, the father is the head of the household. His wife and children are expected to follow the decisions that he makes in the interest in the family. For a Sikh woman, this means as a daughter she must follow the decisions her father makes until she enters an arranged marriage. She is then required to follow the decisions that her husband makes for her (Kakar 1978).

For the Sikh woman, appropriate conduct means being sexually pure. Sexual thoughts are to be suppressed and contact with unrelated males is to be minimal, if not avoided altogether. Appropriate conduct involves being as inconspicuous in public as possible. Whether married or single, the Sikh woman must have recognizable business to justify her movement in public and must spend a minimal amount of time there. Unwomanly contact can be a blot not only on the reputation of a young woman but on that of her family as well. The ultimate sanction for improper conduct is that no man from a decent and respectful family will want to marry such a woman and that the woman will be left an "old maid", bringing further shame on the family (Sharma 1980).

To maintain her family's love and approval, the Sikh woman is expected to conform to the prescriptions and expectations of those around her (Kakar 1978). She defines herself in relation and in connection to those around her. By achieving for the family, she achieves for herself. Bearing a special responsibility for *izzat* or family honour, it is only by conforming to certain standards of modest womanly conduct, can a Sikh woman maintain or even improve her family's status.

Sikh Women and Marriage

From the perspective of the Sikhs, marriage is a sacrament and not merely a social function or a matter of convenience (Barstow 1994: 136). Marriage is viewed as being much more than the joining of two hearts, it is the joining of two families. Ideally, marriage is the aim of every Sikh and divorce is strongly disapproved of. Within the Sikh tradition, marriages are arranged by parents and/or elderly family members, often without the consent of the couple. The parents are responsible for finding a suitable spouse and family (in-laws) for their son(s) and/or daughter(s). In choosing a spouse, the parents need to ensure that the bride and groom belong to different clans and that there is no consanguineal link between the couple (Sharma 1980). Because Sikh villages are said to be comprised of a single clan group, Sikhs tend not to marry someone from their village of origin.

Although the Sikh religion is casteless, "centuries of life encapsulated within the wider Hindu society and of accepting converts who kept the memories of their former caste alive have resulted in caste divisions between the Sikhs" (Mayer 1959: 13). Thus Sikhs practice clan exogamy and caste endogamy. Caste and clan are usually the first

criteria that need to be met before considering the possibility of marriage. Once these requirements are met, other concerns are addressed: status and reputation of the family in question.

The formal negotiations for marriage are mainly conducted by the men of the household. They consult a wide range of friends and kin and rely on the services of a matchmaker to initiate negotiations between the two interested families, thereby negating the need for direct contact and avoidance of possible rejection. If interest is communicated, the match-maker facilitates a formal meeting between the families. This meeting entails a "viewing" of the prospective bride/groom by parents and an entourage of relatives and friends (Vaidyanathan & Naidoo 1987: 49). If the families agree to marriage and it is deemed successful, the reputation of the match-maker grows and s/he may be consulted by other families. On the other hand, if the marriage is unsuccessful and results in problems, the match-maker is blamed and his/her reputation tarnished.

At marriage, the Sikh woman must leave her natal home (*peke*) for that of her husband's (*saure*). In her new home, she must earn the respect of her husband's household. Her behaviour is constrained compared to the privileged affection she received in her parents' home (Sharma 1980). To achieve the full adult status which marriage alone does not confer, the young Sikh bride must bear children. Great expectations are placed on her to give birth to a son. In the context of group pressure, these are expectations which she may also share. Sons are preferred for two main reasons: 1) males inherit the family property and with the dowry system, daughter-in-laws add to the family wealth, and 2) sons are responsible for taking care of elderly parents.

Daughters are perceived as burdens, for dowries must be given away and great care must be taken to ensure that the family honour remains intact until they are married.

Indians Overseas

Research efforts to date indicate that Indian families settled in Canada have undergone a steady accumulation of changes. With respect to family form, Bolaria & Basran (1985) report that the nuclear family with three or less children, is the predominant pattern among Indian immigrant families (cited in Basran 1993). Traditionally, the Indian pattern has been the extended family, with several generations living in the same household.

Another change which has been documented is the reversal of traditional family roles in Indian immigrant families. Rahim and Mukherjee (1984) document that wives have been forced to seek work outside the home because husbands are often unable to find work. They argue that husbands have been replaced by wives as breadwinners and fear that in some instances, such a reversal may contribute to family violence (1984: 56). In contrast, Saran (1985) argues that while many wives may work outside the home, basic attitudes toward the family and familial roles have remained unchanged. These studies at the very least, raise the issue of the extent to which the husband remains the authority and decision maker in the family.

Researchers have also examined role reversals between the older and younger generations. Chazotte & Abramson (1977) point out that as children become familiar with the English language and Canadian society, they are frequently called upon by institutions such as schools to act as interpreters in communication with parents. Such a

role reversal is said to contribute to tension within the parent-child relation. A similar situation is said to occur between elders and their married adult children where the traditional patterns of dependency and authority are reversed. Koehn and Stephenson (1991) report that elders who join their adult children in Canada lose much of their independence. Elders are limited by their language abilities and lack of knowledge of the new culture. Similarly, Assanand et al. (1990) report that the elderly lose their traditional positions of domestic control and authority to their married children. The decisions in the household are primarily made by the adult children although elders may sometimes be consulted. In a culture which venerates age and wisdom, such role reversals can prove to be quite stressful for all those concerned.

There is some indication that the Indian family has become more egalitarian in Canada based on research conducted in the 1970s. Siddique (1977) maintains that the father tends to be less authoritarian than traditionally. He reports that married couples tend to make more decisions together, with wives being primarily responsible for decisions concerning the children. Similarly, Srivastava (1974) states that the conjugal roles of Indian families have indeed become less differentiated, particularly within the context of the nuclear family.

The cultural tradition of the arranged marriage has also undergone some modification. Traditionally, marriages were arranged by parents without the consent of the children. Today, young people seem to have a greater say with respect to their own marriages. But precisely how much freedom they are given is open to debate.

Kurian & Gosh (1983) report that the contemporary pattern of marriage in India and Canada is one arranged by parents **with** the consent of the children involved. However, they also report that Indian youth in Canada are not as supportive of arranged marriages as are their counterparts in India. Similarly, Wakil (1974) reports that although parents are willing to allow their children more freedom regarding marriage, they still want to be involved in the final decision making process. Siddique et al. examined an Indo-Pakistani community in Canada and also found that:

> There was not a single family which would like to arrange the marriage of their children without consulting them. However, the number of those who would leave the matter entirely to the individuals concerned was also very small. The new variant of the arranged marriage system that seems acceptable to a majority of the immigrants is one where the parents would arrange the marriage with the consent of their children (1981: 935).

In contrast, Vaidyanathan & Naidoo (1987) found that at least for educated[8] Sikhs and Hindus, the contemporary pattern of marriage is one which is entered into by the couple **on their own** with the consent of parents. Furthermore, these researchers identified two trends in contemporary marriage patterns: (1) more flexibility in parental authority in the host country as compared to the ancestral country, and (2) an increase in independence and decision making power for the second generation (1987: 72). This is supported by Basran's finding that professional Indian immigrant parents are more tolerant of their children's dating and marriage behaviours than working class parents (1993: 347). However, despite these seemingly more liberal attitudes, Chekki (1988) in his review of comparison research on the Indian family reports that there has been little or no change

[8] Educated meaning some college and/or university education.

in parental attitudes regarding sexual mores and in general, parents do not approve of dating, especially with respect to daughters.

Thus, research indicates that the Indian family has undergone some modifications in Canada. These changes include the move from an extended or joint family structure to a nuclear one, and the questioning of the primacy of males over females and the old over the young. In general, researchers suggest that such changes can prove to be stressful for all those concerned, especially the younger generation (i.e. adolescents). They argue that in addition to the typical "generation gap" which occurs within all families, the ethnic immigrant family experiences an "acculturation gap" which magnifies the problems experienced in the parent-child relationship. The general phrase of "intergenerational conflict" is used to describe this conflict between parents and their children and will be explored further in the next chapter.

Before moving on to the next chapter, I would like to offer some general comments on the kinds of findings the above studies represent. These studies are examples of social survey research in which data is analyzed in terms of statistical probabilities, e.g. measuring attitudinal differences between the generations. The questionnaire is typically the research instrument of choice although in some cases, (structured) interviews are used and complemented with participant observation, (e.g. Siddique 1977). However, despite using these latter methods, very little knowledge is provided about individuals. There is the occasional inclusion of quotations and answers to interview questions but these are used to illuminate the statistical findings rather than to explain the phenomenon under study. The focus is not so much on understanding how

changes occur or the consequences of such changes for individual family members but on providing empirical generalizations. Very often individuals' voices and meanings are dismissed as being irrelevant or inconsequential. Another criticism of research on immigrant Indian families in Canada is that children are typically not included as part of the samples and if and when they are included, researchers often overlook the children's point of view and understandings of issues such as parent-child relations. Until now, studies describing and explaining the meanings of everyday realities of second-generation Indian youth in the Canadian context have been virtually non-existent.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

This chapter is divided into three parts. I begin by tracing the linkages between the concepts of adolescence and generation gap and their relation to the broader concept of intergenerational conflict. I then examine some studies on intergenerational conflict that are specific to Indian youth. In the second part of this chapter, I develop the argument that the existing research has conceptualized this phenomenon through the perspective of cultural conflict. I proceed with critiques of the assimilation and socialization models and discuss their implications for the topic of study. I argue that a common deficiency of these approaches is the way in which culture has been conceptualized and the lack of an emphasis on the creative and negotiated nature of human interaction. In the third part of this chapter, borrowing from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, I develop an alternative framework, one which not only conceptualizes culture as something which is created and negotiated via meanings and accomplished through everyday practices but takes into account the notions of identity and power/resistance.

A) Theoretical Underpinnings

Defining Adolescence

The term adolescence is generally used to refer to the transitional development of the child into adulthood (Roediger et al. 1990: 953). It is a sociohistorical creation, influenced by the economy, political structure, culture and many other environmental factors. Historians now call the period of 1890 to 1920, the "age of adolescence." They believe that it was during this time frame that the concept of adolescence was invented. More specifically, the emergence of youth is traced to the Industrial Revolution and the

separation of home and work as embodied in the factory system. During this time, a great deal of compulsory legislation was enacted leading to decreased employment and increased school attendance by youth.

The last one hundred years has seen an increase in the length of adolescence as a life stage. Nowadays, in North American society, people generally stay in school longer, delay entry into the workforce and delay marriage. This can be attributed in part to the increase in the complexity of the division of labour, advances in technology, and the fact that adult roles need more preparation and schooling. History also documents a series of moral panics over youth by adults in academia, government, social and welfare work. The most recent panics include those over teenage pregnancy, rising youth crime and drug use (e.g. over ecstasy) (Griffin 1997).

There are no sharp boundaries in a person's cognitive or development stage that distinguish when a child becomes an adult. Usually adolescence is associated with the onset of puberty. Many cultures define specific times from childhood to adulthood with elaborate rituals. In North American society, modern "rites of passage" include leaving full-time education, entering the job market, and getting married (Santrock 1993).

Although there is little agreement as to which years make up this life stage, it is typically associated with the teen-age years. Among researchers, there seems to be more consensus about its lower limit, which is usually set at anywhere from 10 to 12 years of age, than about the upper limit which ranges from 18 to 21. The beginning of adolescence might be characterized as "psychosocial puberty"(an emotional preference for peers) and the end as psychosocial independence from parents (Larson et al. 1994:

372). In the following literature review, I will not be specifying the age limits for each study as my intention is to only acquaint the reader with the general findings on adolescents.

Intergenerational Conflict: Lack of a Definition

Academics frequently use the phrase "intergenerational conflict" to describe the conflict that arises between parents and adolescents. However, despite the common usage, this concept has seldom been clearly defined. Much of the theoretical and empirical rationale for conflict is arbitrarily decided by the researcher and has important implications for its interpretation. For example, in attempting to empirically measure and hence quantify intergenerational conflict, many researchers define it as "disagreement between an adolescent and a parent, the level of conflict being measured by the sum of the number of disagreements reported over a specific period of time" (Hamid 1980: 386). It is assumed that adolescents experiencing more intense conflict will have correspondingly larger numbers of disagreements. Such a definition focuses on the frequency of verbal arguments and/or possibly, physical confrontations and is problematic in that "any divergence is labeled as disagreements, when in fact low disagreement could just as easily be termed high agreement or parent-adolescent similarity" (Demo 1991: 113). Another commonly used definition is that which defines parent-adolescent conflict as being more than just disagreement. Disagreement here is taken to imply that situations and issues can be solved calmly and with little effort, whereas conflict is viewed as connoting much greater hostility, aggression and emotion (Hall 1987: 768). The focus of this definition is on intensity rather than frequency.

Such definitions are typical and obviously ambiguous, failing to distinguish between overt and covert forms of conflict. In fact, these definitions mask the presence of covert conflict within families, especially with regard to explosive generational issues. For example, among mainstream North American families, sexuality is viewed as a potentially explosive generational issue. Apparently, most families cope with this issue by silently ignoring it (Montemayor 1983: 92). It is suggested that parents and adolescents may feel that certain issues are not relevant to daily family life and therefore, do not need to be discussed. Furthermore, it is suggested that such an attitude reduces conflict within the family. I beg to differ. It perhaps may be more accurate to suggest that **overt** conflict may be reduced but not necessarily covert or interpersonal conflict. To illustrate, in South Asian immigrant families where parents are first generationers and their children second generationers, researchers have documented that dating is a highly controversial issue. Among the East Indian community, where the traditional practice of arranged marriages is still prevalent and often expected for its younger members, dating is often done covertly. For these young people, dating can lead to serious consequences such as family disgrace, family disownment, reduced marriage prospects, physical abuse, malicious gossip, etc. In this sense, dating is an issue quite relevant to family life. With such high risks involved, at least for some youth, dating can be a source of much tension and interpersonal conflict. I believe that such tension is likely to be manifested in the parent-adolescent relationship, but not necessarily in an observable or direct form.

Therefore, by drawing attention to the overt and observable, researchers devalue covert types of conflict and use definitions which provide little insight into private

feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration, especially on the part of adolescents. Researchers may acknowledge the existence of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship, but focus overwhelmingly on its manifestation in an overt form. By doing so, the question of "What is parent-adolescent conflict?" remains open to interpretation.

Overview of research

There has been a long research tradition concerned with the relationship that exists between adolescents and their parents. Much of the research on parent-adolescent relations has been concerned with the following questions: Does conflict exist within the parent-adolescent relationship? If so, to what extent is this conflict considered problematic? And most importantly, how can such conflict be explained?

The literature on intergenerational conflict reveals somewhat contradictory and confusing findings. This is mainly due to the fact that researchers differ in their theoretical and empirical approaches. Traditionally, the area of adolescence has been dominated by psychology, but in recent decades, sociological interpretations have been gaining ground. The findings on intergenerational conflict can be summarized and understood in terms of two widespread myths about adolescence: 1) adolescence is a pathological time of storm and stress (Hall 1987), and 2) a generation gap exists between adolescents and their parents (Manning 1983). The first myth includes more psychological explanations whereas the second includes more sociological ones.

Much of the academic research on adolescence is characterized by the "classical" point of view which espouses the notion of "storm and stress" (Coleman 1978: 1). This explanation was first introduced by G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924) in his two-volume book

Adolescence; published in 1904. Hall argued that biological changes in aggression accounted for the stress adolescents experienced with their parents and believed that while many adolescents appear to be passive, they are in fact experiencing considerable turmoil within. Discourses of freedom and control were central to Hall's construction of adolescence. For Hall, the period of adolescence constituted an inevitable, biologically-driven conflict between youthful instincts and desires (such as sex, rebellion, freedom from parental control) and the need to control such desires (Griffin 1997). Young people are portrayed as largely being driven by their internal biological processes over which they have little or no control over. Note that the focus is on the adolescent, i.e. the individual. Thus, it is no surprise that the field of adolescence has been dominated by psychology.

Psychoanalytical theory has been used to explain parent-adolescent conflict. According to this perspective, development is primarily unconscious and heavily influenced by emotion. Early experiences with parents are believed to shape an individual's development. Adolescence is often viewed as the result of changing dynamics in the personality brought about by the appearance of sexuality (or increases in id energy) following puberty. For example, psychologist Anna Freud argues that psychological defenses developed in childhood are insufficient to deal with the upsurge of instincts that occur as a result of puberty. Freud argues that in such instances, these instincts can lead to a state of internal emotional upheaval, which in turn is reflected in overt behaviour (Coleman 1978: 2). Another example is Pearson (1958), who in his discussion of unresolved Oedipal and pre-Oedipal conflict, argues that the adolescent

"both loves and hates the parents but must also repress feelings of hatred and sexual attraction" (as reported in Hall 1987: 775). Apparently, the adolescent lacks the ability to repress these feelings and hence conflict is generated.

Another popular line of research taken within the storm-and-stress view is research on identity. Erik Erikson (1968) can be credited for introducing the notion of the adolescent identity crisis. Largely in response to psychoanalytic theory, he argued that individuals develop in psychosocial stages (as opposed to psychosexual stages). For Erikson, the establishment of an identity is the central task of adolescence. Children developed by resolving developmental "crises" which consisted of two opposing outcomes of a struggle with a particular issue. Whereas pyschoanalysis emphasized the importance of early experience, Erikson believed that development was a lifelong process with each period having its own developmental struggle.

The academic research on intergenerational conflict is incomplete without a discussion of the generation gap. The term "generation gap" was invented in the 1960s, a time period during which ethnic conflicts in the form of riots and other political protests by students reached its peak towards the latter part of the decade with the Vietnam War. The term gap is used to draw attention to the fact that people grow up in particular historical moments and may share common experiences with members of their cohort but not those of older and younger generations. Proponents believe that the differences between the two generations is so immense that conflict can not but occur. Much of this research involves a discussion of values and norms, and adolescent socialization. The focus is not so much on the individual but on the social context. Within this approach, it

is argued that conflict over norms and values are seen as inevitable because adolescents are raised in an ever-changing cultural climate; a climate which differs considerably from that to which their parents were exposed while growing up (Hamid: 1980: 385).

A prominent and influential theorist in this area of research is sociologist Kingsley Davis. Based on historical and anthropological accounts relevant to that time, Davis (1940) formulates an answer to the question of "Why does contemporary western civilization manifest an extraordinary amount of parent-adolescent conflict?" (Ibid.: 523) He provides four reasons: (1) social systems limit economic competition to avoid feelings of jealousy by the adolescent towards parents but in the process, a wide variety of opportunities for youth diminish, leading to heightened frustration and ensuing conflict with parents; (2) because youth dream of utopian ideals and parents have become pragmatic, the different perspectives on life lead to conflicting communication between the two generations; (3) parental authority seems less meaningful since it was moulded in a different social milieu and conflict easily arises; and (4) many parents continue to provide direction when it is neither desired nor necessarily appropriate and conflict arises because parents are unwilling to give the adolescent more autonomy or independence (Adams & Gullotta 1989: 38). Davis' basic argument is that societies which are characterized by rapid social change or "modernization" (industrialized societies such as the United States) can lead to heightened levels of conflict between adolescents and their parents. He suggests that, "If, for example, the conflict is sharper in the immigrant households, this can be due to one thing only, that the immigrant family generally undergoes the most rapid social change of any type of family in a given society" (Davis

1940: 524). It is interesting to note that Davis formulated his theory during a period of time characterized by serious economic and political crises. The Great Depression had just occurred in the 1930s and was followed by World War II in the 1940s.

Despite the popularity of the storm and stress and generation gap theses, they are overwhelmingly contradicted by the empirical research. Coleman (1978) and Gecas & Seff (1990) offer excellent reviews of empirical research and conclude that there is little support for these two ideas. The research indicates that the extent of adolescent turmoil and the value differences between the two generations, are greatly exaggerated. Recent empirical research reports that most adolescents feel close to and identify with their parents (Demo 1991: 115), and conflict appears to be over minor issues such as schoolwork, social life and friends, home chores, disobedience, disagreements with siblings and personal hygiene (Montemayor 1983: 92).

Caution should be used when interpreting these findings. Firstly, most of these studies used definitions which were concerned with the quantification of findings by focussing on observable disagreements. Second, such studies are concerned with reported findings. It is possible that a certain degree of conflict was left unreported. Typically, studies on intergenerational conflict utilize obtrusive measures such as standardized questionnaires or structured interviews. Young people may have not been given the opportunity or may have not felt comfortable talking about more serious and/or private issues. Finally, one should bear in mind that the youth who were studied are of mainstream Anglo-Saxon families. How well does this picture fare when ethnic minority

or immigrant families are examined? This question will be addressed in the following section.

Sociological Research on Indian Immigrant Families

Much of the research on Indian immigrant families centres on the social, cultural and psychological effects of the immigration experience and changes to the family system. The emphasis is on conflict, change and continuity. Of interest to this thesis are studies focusing on relations between family members, particularly between parents and children. Five studies from North America and Britain will be discussed in some detail in this section. The studies I discuss include not only Punjabi Sikhs in their samples, but other groups as well: Hindus and Moslems. This is in part due to the tendency of researchers to lump and hence study, the different ethno-religious groups from India under the catch-all phrases of "South Asians" or "Asian Indians". Other researchers purposely include different ethnoreligious groups for comparison purposes.

In George Kurian's (1986) sociological study, questionnaires were used to compare attitudes of Asian youths in Canada with those in India. Kurian wanted to determine whether the differences outweighed the similarities between these two groups. The main assumption was that youth attitudes are influenced by social change: whether in the home country or the host country. Based on the responses by the youth, Kurian concluded that, "[M]ost of the problems of immigrants are the problems of adjustment in an alien culture which has no equivalent for those who live in India" (Ibid.: 82). He argued that in India the general trend is towards change without the serious threatening of

traditions but in Canada, individuals are forced to change to be in tune with the majority culture.

Kurian adopted the approach of assimilation-socialization into a dominant culture to explain the findings. He argued that a generation gap is created by children who are socialized in a western setting; especially when these children mix with their peers and choose friends from other ethnic groups. Furthermore, he argued that this gap is further widened as parents continue identifying themselves with their culture and perceive "westernization" as a corrupting influence for their children.

Wakil, Wakil and Siddique's (1981) sociological study examined the values and ideas emphasized by parents (first generation immigrants) and their children's (second generation) reactions to these values. It also examined the processes of child socialization in a western Canadian city. Data were collected through a combination of informal interviews and participant-observation in the social and cultural activities of the community.

The researchers concluded that Indian immigrant parents have willingly accepted changes in more pragmatic aspects of life such as educational/career attainment, but have rather strongly resisted alterations in "core values" such as non-dating and arranged marriages. The key explanatory concept is socialization. The authors suggest that socialization into Western values had widened the generation gap and increased the conflict over values. They suggest that because the parents were socialized in a traditional setting (India), such-traditional values no longer applied to children socialized in a western setting such as Canada. Once again, the underlying assumption adopted is

that of assimilation. The authors are concerned with the extent of the assimilation process and how this is occurring.

Segal's (1991) exploratory study on Indian immigrants in the United States identified and analyzed generational issues faced by parents and their adolescent children. Cultural values and mores of the study group were explored in order to propose interventionist strategies to alleviate emotional and family problems experienced by this group.

The study involved one three hour long value-clarification seminar for two different focus groups: one for parents and the other for their children. After the seminar, fifteen minute presentations were made by social workers and psychiatrists on the importance of open communication, the physical, social and emotional changes associated with adolescence, and the difficulties that immigrant families may encounter during the process of cross-cultural adjustment. Segal observed that in both the parent and teenager groups, five issues emerged as causing emotional difficulty: control (parental), communication (one-sided), marriage (arranged vs. free choice), prejudice (narrow mindedness of parents towards American culture and corresponding negative attitudes by children towards Indian culture), and finally, expectation of excellence on the behalf of parents. I believe these findings are highly relevant to my own study and warrant further discussion.

With regard to control, Segal observed that many parents did not recognize the ability of their adolescent children to make sound judgements and as a consequence, the children responded with rebelliousness, verbal retaliation, or passive aggressive

behaviour. The children experienced high degrees of frustration and instead chose to exercise their freedom away from home. This lends some support to my own personal observations that young Sikh women engage in covert activities. Second, Segal noted that communication tended to be one-sided: parents spoke and children were expected to listen and agree. The youth reported not sharing their personal concerns with their parents because they felt that their parents would not listen, understand or help. This finding underscores the importance of examining communication patterns when attempting to understand the quality of the parent-child relationship. As a result I decided to strengthen my interview schedule by including questions on communication with parents. Segal also observed that the majority of Indian parents had their own marriages arranged and expected the same for their children. The children's concerns about not being allowed to date culminated in their fear of having an arranged marriage. This was an issue glossed over by other researchers as well and one which I decided to examine more closely with respect to meanings and experiences of youth. With regard to narrow-mindedness, Segal observed that youth believed their parents had prejudicial notions of the American culture and responded by developing their own negative attitudes toward Indian culture. This idea of how attitudes are constructed is one that I wanted to explore in my own research. For example, how is it that some youth come to reject their parents' ethnic culture whereas others come to embrace it? Segal's final observation is that the majority of first generation Indians are professionals and expect their children to also be high achievers. For my own study, I allowed for the possibility that education was a topic of conflict for the young women.

Segal reported that despite these intrafamilial conflicts, overall the youth voiced an unshakable confidence that their ties with their families were stable and permanent. Although Segal's research was largely atheoretical, she concluded that generational conflict occurs when youth conform to peer culture instead of parental norms. Peer group values are said to function in opposition to parental ones. The implicit assumption is of assimilation working under the context of socialization.

This study has several key strengths. First, unlike Kurian (1987a) and Wakil et al. (1981), it is not merely concerned with the measurement of conflict but with identifying issues to better inform social service agencies and practitioners. Rather than arbitrarily defining conflict, Segal allowed the participants to define it for her. The study attempted to "get at" the **perceived** notions of conflict rather than observed events. Furthermore, after the personal interview, separate discussions were held so that parents had the opportunity to interact with other parents, and children with other children. The study became a forum for both generations to voice their concerns and gave these individuals the opportunity to participate actively in the production of sociological research. Finally, to reduce interviewer bias and to facilitate more open and honest discussions, professionals from an East Indian ethnic background were used to oversee the pilot seminars and group discussions.

In Drury's (1991) study on young Sikh girls in Nottingham, the focus is on the quality of intergenerational relationships and the extent to which certain aspects of Sikh religion and cultural traditions are maintained. The sample consisted of 102, 16 to 20 year old second generation females of Sikh background. Using a categorization system of

conformity to interpret the results, Drury observed that the majority of the young women in her sample conformed willingly to many aspects of the Sikh ethnic culture. She reported:

> Another main conclusion is that there was very little evidence of overt intergenerational conflict. Indeed very few members of the second generation openly went against their parents' wishes and, even, when there were acts of 'rebellion', these mostly took place secretly, thus avoiding confrontation. Moreover, certain traditions were no longer transmitted to the young by their parents and so, non-adherence to these cultural traits was not an indication of disobedience (1991: 398).

Drury further observed that of those girls who secretly went out with boyfriends (22% of the total sample), the majority would accept an arranged marriage for themselves and only a small minority of them (4%) were intent on having love marriages even if it destroyed their relationship with their parents (1991: 396). The underlying assumption in this study is that the women's behaviour is regulated by norms. Drury implies that the young women have internalized the norms of the parents' culture to a greater extent than those of the broader society.

In a British study by Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1987), the process of adaptation was examined among Hindu, Muslim and Sikh immigrants and their children. The methodology used consisted of an interview of three hours long with parents and their children who were interviewed simultaneously but separately. A questionnaire which consisted of both standardized and open-ended questions, was given to both groups. Comparisons were drawn with Anglo-Saxon families and across the three ethnoreligious groups (Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus). The assumption being that Asians are not a homogeneous group and will differ somewhat on the basis of religion.

The study concluded that there was a difference between Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus in both generations on an index of traditionalism but it was significant only for the parents. Asians in both generations were found to be significantly more traditional in their attitudes to the family than their British counterparts. However, it should be noted that there was a "greater difference between Asian young people and their parents in traditionalism of attitude than there was between the two British generations" (1981: 150). Interestingly, another finding was that the "daughters, whether from Asian or from British families were less traditional in their attitudes to family life than were sons" (Ibid.: 151). This was attributed to a general increased awareness of women's rights outside the home. The authors also discovered that young people as a group offered more similar explanations than older individuals as a generational group.

Interestingly, these authors rejected the theoretical approach of socialization, or that a difference in time and frame of country between the two generations leads to a breakdown of intergenerational understanding. Rather, the authors accounted for the differences observed between the generations as being due to a change in the Asian family structure. They argue that a change from a three generational household of India to a two generational household in the host country has led to a breakdown of continuity. It is argued that "the model of parents relating to their parents is not present and further, the parents themselves may be under economic and emotional pressures which could reduce the resources that they can put into establishing and confirming patterns" (1981: 151). This argument is a structural one and is somewhat similar to one proposed by Nancy Jabbra (1991) who in her study of Lebanese immigrants argues that changes in

household membership and activities in themselves may lead to changes in attitudes. Although these researchers offer a different explanation for conflict between the generations, the manner in which the data is interpreted is similar to that of Kurian (1987a) and Wakil et al. (1981). The focus is one of significance testing and empirical generalizations.

These studies by and large present much information on the opinions and attitudes of these young people and their parents but very little information with regard to the types of experiences young people have. Cursory findings highlight key issues of concern for Indian youth but there are still many questions left unanswered. What is the seriousness of such conflict from the perspective of the younger generation? To what extent have youths attempted to reduce such conflict? What are some possible coping strategies adopted by youth and how effective are these strategies? None of the studies discuss the power relations involved in the family. Drury offers some illustrations of defiance by young women in her study but without once acknowledging the notion of power in her analysis. In fact, the studies portray young people as powerless victims, denying that they have any control over their own lives. Their lives are viewed as being dictated by parental norms. I suggest that a better understanding of the phenomenon of intergenerational conflict can be achieved by examining the ways in which young people interpret their social realities. New types of questions need to be asked. For example, what does it mean to be an Indian youth growing up in a sometimes racist and discriminating society such as Canada? And what meanings do young people attribute to their experiences and what are the consequences of these meanings for them? How do

young people come to construct these meanings? These are the types of questions I attempt to answer in my own research with respect to young Punjabi Sikh women. However, I believe any explanation also needs to incorporate an understanding of why it is that as researchers we continue to search for conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship and, how is it that we come to construct this notion of intergenerational conflict? Part of the answer has already been discussed with respect to the social creation of adolescence as a modern life stage. The rest of the explanation lies in an understanding of the perspective of cultural conflict and assimilation-socialization assumptions which has framed much of the research, the shortcomings of which will be discussed in the next section.

B) Existing Framework

The Culture Conflict Perspective

The culture conflict perspective is frequently invoked as an explanation in research on ethnic minorities. Within this perspective, it is commonly believed that intergenerational conflict within immigrant families of ethnic minority background is **qualitatively** different from that within nonimmigrant families in being primarily a conflict between two cultures. The underlying assumption is that immigrant youth experience conflict to a much greater extent than nonimmigrant youth and any problems that arise are the direct result of their immigrant status (Baptiste 1993: 342). Researchers within the tradition of assimilation and acculturation theories argue that adolescents who are immigrants or whose parents are immigrants, adapt or acculturate more quickly to the new culture than their parents. Parents, having been raised in a different cultural

environment, retain the traditions of their country of origin and expect their children to adhere to the traditional ways. Conflict apparently arises for the adolescent because s/he is caught "in-between" cultures and must choose between the traditional culture of his/her parents and the larger "western" culture. The immigrant family is then said to become polarized with respect to these different acculturation rates (e.g. Baptiste 1987; Landau-Stanton 1985). Thus, researchers theorize that problems of adaptation are manifested as heightened conflict (Rosenthal 1984: 57).

This culture-conflict perspective with its strong assimilationist undertones has several weaknesses. First, it fails to recognize that generational conflict exists in families of any background. By exclusively focussing on conflict within immigrant families, it portrays these families and their individual members as being somehow different. This relates to a second criticism. The culture-conflict perspective is conducive to constructing oppositional and hierarchical categories of coloured / white, East / West, traditional / modern, and repression / freedom (Puar 1995, Ballard 1979). Being dark skinned is equated with being repressed by one's traditional (and backward) culture. In contrast, being white is equated with being modern and free of such backward cultural practices/ideas. Such false binary oppositions have been utilized to conceptualize and represent Indian youth as passive and powerless victims, as the "Other", as different and inferior from the norm of "whiteness". The assumption is that the standards of the dominant society, that is, the white middle-class culture represent, the norm against which all other cultures should be measured.

Culture is conceptualized in terms of mutual exclusiveness where immigrant youth are placed in an either / or framework. They must choose between being "ethnic" or "white"(more mainstream). As Puar writes, "[t]he either / or equation freezes the South Asian other without political or social agency or the room to negotiate subjectivity...The South Asian other's identity is thus defined as directly oppositional to white culture-defined not by the self but by the dominant white other" (1995: 26). Emphasis is placed on the incompatibility of the Asian and Western cultures. This perspective assumes that cultural values are fixed and static and in doing so, allows no possibility of flexibility between one set of values and another (Ibid.: 108). Furthermore, this perspective assumes that immigrant youth of ethnic minority backgrounds desire to be more "white". This obviously ethnocentric assumption ignores the realities of immigration and racial discrimination experiences. Thus, the culture is viewed as being inferior and problematic and is understood as "only a source of oppression and the only source of oppression" (Puar 1995: 25). In this manner, the phenomenon of intergenerational conflict has been conceptualized from the mainstream "white" perspective. I submit that there is a need for a new understanding of intergenerational conflict, one that refrains from such devaluation of the cultures of first generation immigrants.

Assimilation Theory

The theoretical political/sociological interest in the assimilation of immigrants can be traced to the work of the Chicago school of the 1920s and 1930s. This perspective emerged during a time when an unprecedented number of immigrants with

various religious or ethnic backgrounds came to the United States. For the first time in American history, Americans of British origin represented less than half of the country's total population. In the midst of calls for restricting immigration, the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago was commissioned to produce a series of papers titled "Methods of Americanization" (Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler 1994: 664). In this manner, the assimilation ideology was crystallized.

The assimilation ideology has dominated much of North American sociology and has been subjected to much criticism in recent decades. Despite this, the theoretical framework of assimilation continues to inform much of the work in the field of race and ethnicity, albeit in a more implicit manner. This is especially the case with studies on intergenerational conflict in immigrant groups where assimilation theory has been used to argue that conflict arises in immigrant or ethnically racialized families due to different acculturation rates by parents and their children.

Assimilation has been traditionally used by sociologists to describe the adaptation of ethnic immigrant groups in western nations such as the United States, Canada and Britain. The assimilation framework is viewed as an ongoing process. It is often traced to the work of Robert E. Park and Milton Gordon. It is a developmental model of society which predicts that over time, with exposure to modernizing forces such as urbanism, industrialization, mass education and mass consumption, immigrants and their subsequent generations will discard their own ethnic, social and cultural ties and will instead conform to the mores, life style and values of the dominant group in question (Gordon 1964, Newman 1973). Assimilation is thus, synonymous with conformity to the

Anglo-Saxon model. It is generally assumed that the goal of all immigrant groups is that of complete assimilation or conformity to western mainstream culture.

Milton Gordon's work is viewed as the canonical statement of assimilation. In his influential and much cited book Assimilation in American Life (1964), Gordon advances the notion of assimilation as a multidimensional concept. He identifies seven stages of assimilation. Of particular importance are the first two stages: cultural or social assimilation (acculturation), and structural assimilation. Cultural assimilation is defined as "the adaptation by an ethnic group of the cultural patterns of the surrounding society (recognizing that these patterns may themselves be changed by the group's presence)" (Alba 1992: 576). This type of assimilation involves two sets of cultural traits; **external**, such as dress and language and **internal**, such as beliefs and values. Structural assimilation is defined as "the entry of an ethnic group's members into close, or primary, relationships with members of the dominant group (or, at least, ethnic outsiders)" (Ibid.: 577). This involves entrance into clubs, cliques and institutions of the host society. Although Gordon argued that cultural assimilation can exist without leading to structural assimilation and vice-versa, he did believe that with the achievement of structural assimilation, all other forms of assimilation would then inevitably occur and be experienced by the immigrant group.

Much of the existing research on assimilation is concerned with developing valid methods of measuring changes across generations. In general, the emphasis is on testing and the empirical validation of Gordon's model. Much of this research has focused on socioeconomic status and its relation to assimilation (e.g. Montero, 1981; Osako and Liu,

1986; Rosenthal & Auerbach, 1992) and strongly supports the notion of acculturation. However, much research also demonstrates the retention of certain cultural practices and traditions by immigrants well into the third generation (e.g. Constantinou 1989, Constantinou and Harvey 1985).

Aside from lacking empirical support, the assimilation framework is problematic in several other respects. First, the assimilation framework tends to be teleological in assuming that assimilation is an inevitable accompaniment of modernization. Second, the assimilation framework leads one to view modernization as a change in society which has a kind of controlling impact on individual actions, thereby overlooking the way human agents themselves adjust and adapt. Culture is viewed as a homogeneous and static entity, allowing for no insight into the motivational and decision-making processes of individuals. Assimilation theory would lead us to believe that immigrants assimilate because they want to assimilate. Such a view is obviously ethnocentric in nature. The degree of assimilation may vary in relation to the motivations for moving to the new country (e.g. economic or political) and the resources of these individuals. Finally, the assimilation process is assumed to be unilateral, with little consideration given as to how the "mainstream" population adapts to a particular ethnic immigrant population.

Socialization Theory

Socialization is defined as "the complex learning process through which individuals develop selfhood and acquire the knowledge, skills and motivations required for participation in social life" (Mackie 1987: 77). In adopting the notion of socialization, most researchers utilize a learning theory perspective. Within this

perspective, children interact with "significant others" such as parents. Significant others are role models, with whom the child has developed an emotional or personal attachment. These role models provide the patterns of behaviour and conduct on which the child patterns himself or herself. For example, children learn to take on appropriate gender roles. This is referred to as gender socialization and is defined as "the processes through which individuals learn to become feminine and masculine according to the expectations current in their society" (Mackie 1987: 78). Because of the relatively high status placed on being male, Eichler (1980: 20) defines gender socialization as the "systematic teaching of the double standard" (quoted in Mackie 1987: 78). Gender socialization is viewed as being important for the individual development of a gender identity and learning of norms/rules appropriate to one's gender. Children learn the culturally appropriate ways of identifying and classifying males and females (including themselves), as well as about prevailing ideas about the relative prestige, qualities, and behaviour of the sexes.

Children are also socialized in culturally appropriate behaviour. It can be argued that parents seek to convey to their children specific "cultural content" consisting of values, meanings and goals. These ideal types function as sources of expectations that place constraints in face-to-face interaction. It is believed that many children experience much ambiguity living in two worlds: the ethnic community and "mainstream" society. Children are being socialized by parents in the private domain and the public domain such as schools, peers and the media, experience substantial conflicts in role expectations (Peterson & Rollins 1986: 480 - 481).

With regard to criticisms of the approach of socialization, Dennis Wrong (1961) in his landmark paper argues that there is a tendency for researchers to offer an oversocialized view of individuals. He suggests that there are two types of meanings of socialization. First, socialization means the "transmission of the culture", i.e. the particular culture of the society that an individual enters at birth. The second meaning is that individuals are socialized in the sense of "becoming human", acquiring uniquely human attributes from interaction with others. He points out that all persons are socialized in the latter sense but this does not mean they have been completely moulded by the particular norms and values of their culture (Ibid.: 192). More specifically, Wrong argues that theorists such as Talcott Parsons, in using the approach of socialization to explain the enactment of adult roles and the embracement of gender-role identities, often overlook the aspect of voluntarism or human agency. The dominant socialization model of roles as social scripts which more or less instruct the individual what to do and be offers only a partial explanation. I agree with Wrong's analysis and argue that consideration needs to be given to the ability of an individual to choose, negotiate or reject values or beliefs that are imposed on him/her by powerful others, i.e. parents.

C) Alternative Framework

Having discussed the shortcomings of the assimilation and socialization approaches to the study of intergenerational conflict, I submit a new perspective is needed - one which does not neglect active and creative human behaviour. Such a perspective is that of symbolic interactionism. A key strength of symbolic interactionism is that it views individuals as active, reflective agents who construct and give meaning to

their lives rather than as passive objects that are acted upon. In the following section, I begin by introducing this perspective and outlining its basic premises. I then proceed into a discussion of the usefulness of symbolic interactionism, with its less rigid outlook on socialization and insights on self and identity as social processes. I supplement these insights with a model of culture as tool-kits. Because symbolic interactionism is usually criticized for not paying adequate attention to power, I draw from feminist conceptualizations of power to complete this alternative framework.

The Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a "down to earth" approach which "may be envisioned as the study of ways in which people make sense of their life-situations and the ways they go about their activities, in conjunction with others, on a day-to-day basis" (Prus 1996: 10). Symbolic interactionists are primarily concerned with the creation of meaning through interaction, meaning which determines an individual's actions. It is through interaction with others that self and society are continually created and recreated in reciprocal fashion (Stephan 1991: 262).

There are three basic premises of symbolic interactionism as posited by Blumer (1969). The first is that human beings act toward the physical objects and other beings in their environment on the basis of meanings that these things have for them. Human behaviour is not understood as merely the response to stimuli that are external to the individual or as merely the reflection of an overarching and overwhelming system of culture but as a function of the meaning attributed to objects, situations, and the anticipated consequences of the behaviour that emerge or are sustained in the interaction

(Lauer & Handel 1977: 303). Second, these meanings derive from the social interaction between and among individuals. In other words, meaning of an object or situation is not inherent but rather arises out of interaction. This occurs through communication. Communication is said to be symbolic because we not only communicate through language and other symbols, but in communicating, we create or produce significant symbols (Schwandt 1994: 123). Mead (1934) argues that symbols are "significant" or "meaningful" in that symbols have meaning to both the individual as a user of these symbols and to others with whom the individual communicates. Symbols include not only words but acts (e.g. hugging represents affection) and physical objects (e.g. diamonds represent luxury). In this sense, symbols are shared meanings. Third, meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process. Interpretation is two-fold. First, one interacts with oneself, indicating to oneself the relevant meanings and then one may choose among these meanings and perhaps redefine them before acting. Interpretation is thus, "not a matter of mechanically applying preformed meanings from an existing repertoire, but of selecting and revising meanings" (Lauer & Handel 1977: 304).

What is meant by "meaning" needs to be further discussed. Symbolic interactionists argue that human beings are not so simply motivated by drives but more generally by meanings. Meaning is viewed as variable and emergent. In other words, the "meanings on which we act are never fixed or final, but emerge and change as we go about our affairs" (Hewitt 1997: 21). Meaning is found in both overt conduct and that which is not observed by others but verbalized silently. Meaning also means that people

act with plans and purposes, some consciously planned, many taken-for-granted or routine.

Socialization and Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionists also make reference to socialization but in a more flexible way than has been traditionally used. According to this perspective, socialization is an interaction process that involves the acquisition of shared meanings and is reciprocal in nature; affecting socializer as well as socializee (Lauer & Handel 1977: 54). To illustrate, parents socialize their children and children also socialize their parents. From this perspective, role-playing involves interaction with significant others but it is an interpretive process through which people develop lines of actions. Interactionists emphasize that through interaction, the child learns to role-take, i.e. take the perspective of the other, see the world from the other's self and direct the self accordingly (Charon 1979: 98). With continued role-taking the child learns to take the perspective of significant others, then the "generalized other" or the attitudes of a whole group (the general community) and then the perspective of a number of different groups. These latter groups may include membership groups and groups based on social categories such as social class, and ethnic groups. Conceptualized in this way, I believe the socialization approach can prove useful for analysis.

Conceptualizing Culture

It has been argued that the literature on intergenerational conflict is dominated by the cultural-conflict and assimilation-socialization perspectives. The shortcomings of these perspectives can be attributed partly to the way in which culture is conceptualized.

Culture is traditionally theorized in terms of its prescriptive elements: values, norms, beliefs and attitudes of a particular group of people. The assumption being that "culture shapes action by supplying ultimate ends or values toward which action is directed" (Swidler 1986: 273). This view of "culture as values" is the dominant approach and dominates much of mainstream sociology. Crane (1994) writes, "classical sociological and anthropological theory emphasized a conception of culture as consistent and coherent that was more ideal or an ideology than a reality...It is significant that mainstream sociology has not yet come to terms with the new postmodern *zeitgeist* which emphasizes those aspects of culture that are inherently contradictory, inconsistent and incoherent" [original italics] (1994: 4). The classical conceptualization of culture is problematic as culture is treated as something that people have instead of something which is created and negotiated via meanings and accomplished through everyday practices.

Like other sociologists, symbolic interactionists emphasize the prior existence and impact of society and culture. However, symbolic interactionists believe that "society and culture shape and constrain conduct but that they are also the products of culture" (Hewitt 1997: 23). In other words, they believe that culture is both a social product and social process. Symbolic interactionists rework concepts such as culture to describe the recurring meanings and practices which people produce when they do things together (Prus 1996).

One conceptualization of culture which is compatible with this framework is Ann Swidler's (1986) model of culture as a "tool-kit". Influenced by French theorist Pierre

Bourdieu (1977) and anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Swidler argues that culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a constant direction but rather is more like a "tool-kit" or repertoire. She writes:

> Culture provides the materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action. Such cultural resources are diverse, however, and normally groups and individuals call upon these resources selectively, bringing to bear different styles and habits of action in different situations (1986: 280).

She explains that culture provides tool-kits in the form of "symbols, stories, rituals, and world views" that people use to solve problems and to organize their activities over time. People are not passive "cultural dopes" but rather are active, skilled users of culture (Swidler 1986: 277). For Swidler, culture consists of symbolic vehicles of meanings, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms and informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life.

Departing from the internalized values causal model, Swidler's reformulation provides a general structure of meaning which individuals use to solve the problems they face. The focus is on "strategies of actions", persistent ways of ordering action through time and the cultural components that are used to construct these strategies (1986: 273).

Self and Identity

One of the most significant contributions of symbolic interactionism has been its conceptual work on the self and identity. Symbolic interactionism uses the concept of the self to designate both an object that is created as people interact with others and the process through which this object is created (Hewitt 1997: 48). This concept of self follows from George Herbert Mead's (1934) distinction between "I" and "Me".

According to Mead, the "I" designates the individual as subject. It refers to the process in which people respond as acting subjects to objects or to the particular or generalized others [the group, community or society as a whole] in their situations. The pronoun "Me" designates the social self which arises from the process in which people imagine themselves as objects in their situations (Hewitt 1997: 51). The significance of Mead's "I" - "Me" distinction is the notion of the self as reflexive. In other words, to have a self is to have the ability to think about oneself, to evaluate oneself, and to act socially toward oneself (Mackie 1987: 117). Thus, interactionists argue that the individual is both an acting subject and an object in his / her own experience. Individuals take not only themselves into account when they act but also others. They are capable of considering their own acts from the vantage point of the group as a whole and imagining the consequences of their acts for others. They are also capable of self-absorption and of putting their own interests before those of others (Hewitt 1997: 21-22). This conceptualization of self as object to itself has been elaborated by scholars in recent decades to produce the concept of identity.

Like the notion of the self, the concept of identity is viewed as a process. It is used as a way of linking the individual and the society (Weigert et al. 1986). Symbolic interactionists use the term identity to refer to the social meaning of the self. Identity is not identical with self but expresses the notion of self as social object. Identity is viewed as a social reality that is continually produced within and by the experience and interaction of individuals (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Gregory P. Stone (1981) defines identity as a "coincidence of placements and announcements" (Hewitt 1997: 90).

Announcements consists of anything that another can interpret as an indication of the role that an individual intends or wants to enact in a situation. Coincidence means the process by which a match occurs between the person's claiming an identity and others granting it. According to Stone, a person has identity when s/he is situated, that is, cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his/her participation or membership in social relations. For example, the women in this study will have a variety of situated identities - student, daughter, sister, friend, girlfriend, part-time employee, etc. To "have" a situated identity requires that others certify our announcements of that identity by placing us in terms of it. Others may act toward us on the basis of placements we do not immediately recognize or accept and the full impact of these identities does not occur until we recognize and either certify or reject their placements. This implies that identities are multiple and fluid, not all of them acted nor invoked in any situation.

For Stone, an identity announcement consists of anything that another can potentially interpret as an indication of the role that an individual intends or wants to enact in a situation. He notes that announcements may be intentional or unwitting. For example, skin colour may imply a racialized identity regardless of whether an individual wants to announce it. This is especially the case in North American white society where a persons of colour are readily identifiable. The same can be said of gender identities.

Identity is not simply a product of a situated role. To refer to a person's larger and more durable sense of social location that is linked to a variety of roles, situations and groups over a longer period of time, the interactionist notion of a biographical self is useful (Hewitt 1997: 92). The self is not merely an object in the particular situation but

also a social object linked to the past and future (Ibid.: 89). This is the biographical self and can be understood using the concepts of social and personal identity. Social identity refers to a sense of self that is built over time as a person participates in social life and identifies with others. The frame of reference is not the immediate situation and role but rather a community, the set of real or imaginary others with whom the person feels an affinity. Along with a social identity people form a sense of personal identity. This is a sense of continuity and integration grounded in an autonomous sense of self rather than identification with others. It is social and personal identity that arrange and order various situated roles, causing us to give priority to some and to regulate others to a lesser position.

When speaking of self and identity, another important concept is that of salience. Sheldon Stryker (1980) theorizes that identities are organized into hierarchies of salience and the more prominent an identity is, the greater the person's propensity to seek out opportunities to act in terms of that identity (Hewitt 1997). In other words, some identities are at the center of the individual's concerns while others are peripheral. In this sense, the self is organized by the individual's identities.

Power and Resistance

Power has been conceptualized in numerous ways. The literature on this topic is literally overwhelming. For convenience sake, I narrow the discussion of power to the literature on marriage and the family. Such a discussion will prove helpful for understanding how power has traditionally been used to explain conflict in parent - adolescent relations.

The discussion of power did not enter the family literature until about the 1960s. To explain the conflict that arises between parents and their children, the construct of "parental control" has been typically used. Parental control refers to the behaviour of the parent toward the child with the intent of directing the behaviour of the child in a manner that is desirable to parents. Put simply, this construct refers to parental discipline and may be achieved through for example, the use of coercion (external force) or love withdrawal (inducement).

"Parental power" is another typical construct used in the parent-adolescent literature. The notion of parental power stems from social power theory which defines power as "the potential an individual has for compelling another person to act in ways contrary to their own desires" (Hoffman 1960: 129). Parental power refers to the **potential** ability of parents to exercise control over their children. It includes power which is perceived by children as opposed to being acted out. Researchers argue that the extent to which parents are viewed as significant others by their children is a reflection of the degree of power that is ascribed to them (Peterson and Rollins 1987: 477).

Power as the potential ability of parents to exercise control over their children can be argued to be an improvement over the definition of power as the behaviour of the parent toward the child with the intent of directing the behaviour of the child in a manner that is desirable to parents, since it does not limit itself by referring solely to behaviour that is acted out. However, like parental control, the construct of parental power tends to treat power as a possession - something that a person or group collects and as flowing in one direction, from parent to child. Both definitions are inadequate as they fail to take

into account the notion of the power to resist. It is obvious that parents hold a certain degree of power over their children, whether actualized or perceived but attention also needs to be drawn to the fact that children are not completely powerless themselves. Several studies indicate that children exert power not only vis-à-vis other children, but also over their parents. For example, they participate in family decision making and problem solving. Research also indicates that children exert power by using "good" behaviour or compliance to obtain desired benefits or tasks (Peterson & Rollins 1987).

A better conceptualization is offered by Elizabeth Janeway (1981). She argues that power is not a thing that we possess, but rather is something we *do* (Janeway 1981). Power is the process of bargaining and compromise in which priorities are set and decisions made in relationships (Lips 1991: 4). It is a process present throughout social relations; a process which both parties contribute to, regardless of who is dominating. For example, within the context of the family she observes that the transition from dependent childhood to a self-sufficient adulthood involves learning how to respond to, predict and control events, to bargain and negotiate with others and rebel.

Another important aspect of Janeway's conceptualization is her label of "powers of the weak". She argues that weaker members of a relationship have an understanding of and sensitivity to the power relationship that the stronger do not have. The weak exert power by questioning and doubting the more powerful and by studying the motivations of the powerful in order to survive. These are tactics of the "power under". Janeway's conceptualization allows for the possibility that a reverse relationship is possible,

originating from those subject to power. This is described as the notion of resistance[9] or counterdiscourse. A key strength of such an approach is that it avoids a zero-sum framework in which an increase in certain forces is matched by a decrease in the power of others (Cooper 1994: 487). Moreover, it recasts individuals as active participants in their social worlds rather than as passive victims of their subordination (Radtke & Stam 1994: 7).

Summary

In this section, I presented an alternative framework for studying and understanding the phenomenon of intergenerational conflict as it is experienced by immigrant youth of ethnic minority / racialized backgrounds. This framework consists of insights and conceptual tools as developed within, or which are compatible with, the perspective of symbolic interactionism. The notion of self and (situated) identities, the conceptualization of culture as a "tool-kit" and the concept of power "from below" will be used to obtain an understanding of how young Punjabi Sikh women are actively able to negotiate and resist their everyday lived realities.

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[9] The term resistance stems from French structuralist Michel Foucault's work of the late 70s and early 80s. Foucault's most famous saying is "[W]here there is power there is resistance" (quoted in Cooper 1994: 441). Feminists have increasingly taken up Foucault's notion of resistance and power as a relation between forces.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Insights from the theoretical and methodological[10] perspective of symbolic interactionism is used to inform this research. As a perspective, symbolic interactionism focuses on the nature of interaction; on human beings acting in relation to one another. This means taking one another into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, and acting again (Charon 1979: 23). Reality is viewed as a social process and life can be understood through an understanding of the perceptions, interpretations, decisions of individuals and the actions they take. This is illustrated by Blumer who offers the following comment in the gender-biased language of his time:

> In short, one would have to take the role of the actor and see his world from his standpoint. This methodological approach stands in contrast to the so-called objective approach so dominant today, namely that of viewing the actor and his action from the perspective of an outside, detached observer...the actor acts toward his world on the basis of how he sees it and not an the basis of how that world appears to the outside observer (Blumer 1966: 542).

In this study, to understand the nature of intergenerational conflict and how young women make sense of their lives and experiences with regard to this phenomenon, I used the general research strategy of building explanations grounded in lived experience. To accomplish this task, I adopted the stance popularized by researchers such as Ann Oakley (1981). I treated the women's accounts, their words, as fairly accurate representations of their realities and complemented their responses with my interpretations of what was

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[10] Borrowing from Sandra Harding (1987), I would like to make a distinction between methodology and methods. Methodology refers to the theory on how research is carried out or the broad principles about how to conduct research. Methods are the particular procedures used in the course of research.

said. I had much confidence in what the women told me based on their willingness to talk about issues such as suicide. And found that much of what they told me was consistent with my own personal knowledge of these women's' lives outside the interview process whether as my acquaintances or friends. In the few cases of those women who were referred to me and whom I was not acquainted with, I found no discrepancy between what these women told me and what I knew about them from the accounts of those participants who referred these women to me in the first place. Because I also found that much of my own experience corroborated the women's, I felt very confident about what they told me in the interviews.

Research Method

Much of the existing literature on intergenerational conflict in South Asian immigrant families focusses on the quantification and enumeration of the differences between parents and their children. For many of these studies, a questionnaire is the research instrument. From such studies, much is known about personal tastes in clothing and food, language preferences and participation in social and religious activities, but very little is known about the lived experiences of individual family members, especially with respect to the younger generation. I have criticized the existing research for rendering the experiences of young people invisible (including my own), and this was something I did not wish to perpetuate in my own research. Instead, I wanted to place (women's) experiences at the centre of the inquiry. I wanted to understand the processual and multiple ways in which young Punjabi Sikh women construct their everyday realities. Furthermore, based on my own experiences of growing up as a second generation Punjabi

Sikh woman in Canada, it was obvious to me that questionnaires were unable to uncover hidden aspects of conflict. Also, considering the sensitive nature of the subject matter, I felt that the only way to gain insights into the experiences of young women and their interpretations of that experience was to use a method that privileged the individual; a method that taps into the experiences of the individual. With these considerations in mind, I decided to use the methods of in-depth interviews and diary analysis.

The interview is "a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" (Lofland and Lofland 1984: 12). By design, the interviews which I used involved relatively unstructured questions and became free-flowing conversations between each participant and myself as the researcher. Such interviews are referred specifically to as "in-depth interviews" due to the flexibility involved in asking questions and the opportunities for probing beyond the initial questions. In accordance with the perspective of symbolic interactionism, this method enables me to begin with the participants' understandings and meanings. Likewise, diaries as personal accounts allow individuals to speak about their feelings, thoughts and lives. The focus in both of these methods is on the way in which individuals interpret their experience and construct reality (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Thus with these two methods, participants are given the opportunity to use their own voices to describe their individual and personal experiences of "intergenerational conflict".

The Research Process

Selection of Participants

In this study, I used two different recruiting techniques: snowball networking and advertising. Initially I had only intended to use the method of snowballing but after two weeks of using this method and no responses, I decided to advertise for potential participants. Despite my own concerns with regard to the non-personal nature of this method and the less than ideal timing, (less than six weeks were left until the commencement of final examinations on campus), I decided to proceed. My fear of not being able to locate participants was greater than my concerns about using advertising as a method of recruitment. So, in the month of March (1997), I began advertising for participants. I posted several calls for volunteers (Appendix A) at the University of Victoria campus: in the lounge areas of the Women's Drop-In Centre and the Students of Colour Collective, and in the hallways of several university buildings, including the library. I posted these "ads" for a time period of a little over one month. Despite this effort, I did not receive a single response, let alone an inquiry with regard to the research. Although I had anticipated problems with this research, I had not expected a zero response rate. Fortunately, the method of "snowballing" which I will outline below (Appendix B), proved to be far more successful.

From the months of March to June (1997), I used the snowball method of networking to locate participants. I asked selected members of my informal networks (ten individuals) to approach others in their own networks (e.g. friends, acquaintances, relatives) and to ask these others if they would be interested in participating in the

research. To safeguard the identities of my participants, I will not describe how I located these select members. I will simply mention that I approached persons I knew who had a number of Indian friends. I provided each selected member with a brief description of the research (Appendix C) which they used informally in conversations with potential participants. As instructed, they gave out my home phone number to interested individuals and asked permission to give out the individual's phone number to me. The next step often involved me phoning the interested individual to discuss the research in further detail (Appendix D) and/or as was sometimes requested, to arrange an introductory meeting. During this first conversation, if the participant agreed to participate, and met the eligibility requirements (Appendix D), an interview time and place was then mutually arranged.

Using the above technique of snowballing, I was only able to obtain three participants from the Victoria area. All three women were acquainted with me and two of the women had approached me directly, wanting to participate. The other woman had met me on a few occasions and knew of me through a common friend. Initially, I had decided against interviewing women that I was acquainted with and/or had formed friendships with simply because I was concerned that they may somehow feel obligated to participate. Furthermore, my friendships with two of these women were newly formed (less than a year) and I was worried about how much they would actually be willing to reveal about themselves to me and the impact that this would have on our relationships **after** the research was completed. I discussed these concerns with both women and they assured me that they were participating for their own reasons, hoping that my research

would make some sort of difference in the community. Furthermore, they told me that it was only because they felt that they **knew** me, that they could trust me, that they approached me in the first place.

Faced with the difficulty of locating participants, I decided to expand my search to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. This made sense for two main reasons. First, the Vancouver Punjabi Sikh community is a significantly larger one. I speculated that more women may step forward because of the overall increased awareness of such issues in the community. Second, Vancouver was my former hometown and one in which I had an active network of relatives and friends that I could easily tap into. Thus, in the months of May to June (1997), I was able to locate and connect with eight other women, seven from the Vancouver area and one whom I will simply say lives in a town/city somewhere in southern British Columbia. I initiated contact with one woman myself. Hearing about my research from friends, five of these women contacted me directly and consequently put me in touch with two other women. These two other women were the only ones that I was not previously acquainted with. During the first interview, when asked how they heard about the research, they offered the following comments:

> I heard about the research from [person's name]. She said you were a cool person and that I could talk to you.
>
> [Person's name] told me that you weren't the type to gossip. She's always said good things about you too and that you know what it's like. She said you've been there too.

This issue of trust was crucial to the success of the study and is worth discussing here. The selected members of my informal networks (both in Victoria and Vancouver) consistently reported that the women they had approached (totalling sixteen), thought the

research was "cool" and agreed that it was very much needed but were unwilling to participate themselves. Despite guarantees of anonymity, these women voiced concerns about malicious gossip and "ruining" their reputations. I was told that because they were not acquainted with me, they were worried that I may "leak" information and/or somehow be unknowingly related to them. Some of the women who were approached, especially those under 20 years of age, expressed the concern that they may **become** related to me in the future via their own (arranged) marriage to an individual in my extended family.

Describing the Participants

I eventually interviewed eleven young women of Punjabi Sikh background from Victoria and the Vancouver areas. This was an arbitrary figure and dependent on factors such as the depth and scope of interviews.

All the women were of Punjabi Sikh background with the exception of one woman. This woman had a Punjabi Hindu parent and loosely identified herself as Punjabi Sikh. Because I was experiencing difficulty recruiting participants and because I was not using a causal model where religion or ethnicity are "independent" variables, I decided to include her in the study. Punjabi refers to 1) the parents' former place of residence, i.e. Punjab, India and 2) the ethnic language of the parents. Sikh(ism) refers to the religion which the immigrant parents identify with. I decided to target Punjabi Sikh women for two reasons. First, my own ethnic/cultural background is Punjabi Sikh. Not only do I have a personal and intimate knowledge of this religion and culture but direct

access to this community. Second, I had a personal desire to share my experiences with like others and to come to an insightful understanding of these experiences.

The women who were interviewed were between the ages of 16 to 24. I chose the lower limit of 16 because the literature indicated that this was the age at which dating usually became an issue. The literature also revealed that dating is the most controversial issue for Indian parents (Kurian 1986: 44). Furthermore, with respect to giving consent, youth at this age and above are capable of giving consent on their own. This enabled women to participate in the research without their parents' legal consent. I believe that parents would not have consented to their daughters participating in the research otherwise. In addition, the child researchers, Scabini and Galimberti (1995) among others, argue that there has been a prolongation of adolescence and the insertion of a new phase-the young adult. These researchers point out that for example, in Italy, most young people tend to stay with their families until they get married: "marriage is the event that signals structural withdrawal from the family" (1995: 593). The same can be said with respect to Indian immigrant families. Children do not leave their homes and are often not treated as adults until they are married (Kakar 1978). Based on my own personal experiences, I find this to be quite true for Punjabi Sikh families as well.

Another reason as to why I decided to include women from this seemingly broad age range is that younger women may not yet have experiences of dating or given thought to issues of marriage; two controversial topics for second generation-ers. In contrast, the "older" women are most likely to have **more** narratives to share. These women can look back at more years of experiences dealing with tensions and problems with parents. I felt

that their narratives would only contribute to the richness of the data and would provide me with an understanding of how the experiences and strategies of young Punjabi Sikh women have developed over time.

All the women were second generation Canadians, e.g. born in Canada or five years of age or less upon immigration to Canada, and had parents who were first generation immigrants. By requiring that the parents be first generation immigrants, I was assuming that the parents were still committed to the beliefs of their country of origin, India.

All the women were single and still living at home with the exception of one (Raman). I decided to include this participant because although she was not living at home with her parents, she was still considered very much a part of her parent's household and their responsibility. Despite being miles away, she was still expected to abide by her parents' "rules".

The Initial Interview

Before I actually began the search for participants, I conducted an initial[11] interview. By "initial", I mean an exploratory interview which allowed me to improve the quality of my interview questions. This initial interview helped me to rephrase and refine the questions that I intended to ask in the formal interviews. Due to time constraints, I was only able to conduct one initial interview. Ideally, I had planned to do two. However, I found that the quantity of initial interviews was not important because

[11] I purposely choose to use the term "initial" instead of the more common term of "practice" interviews as I do not want to convey the (false) notion that such exploratory probing interviews do not "count" as part of the data.

of the depth I achieved with just the one. The purpose of the interview was to develop questions that were sensitive and yet conducive to tapping into the experiences of the interviewees. The initial interview was conducted with a woman of Punjabi Sikh background who later volunteered to participate in the study. I had personally approached this woman with only the possibility of participating in the initial interview. At the time I was unclear about whether she was eligible or not due to her one half Hindu background. After the initial interview (which was not audio-taped), she expressed a strong willingness to participate . I believe that she felt that the experience had been "safe" for her. This posed a slight problem for myself: by including her in the study, would I somehow be "contaminating" the data? After some careful thought, I decided to include this woman. After all, what did I have to lose? By conducting a second and more thorough interview, I could only gain more information. And this was indeed the case. Her answers only differed in terms of the **details** she provided. The initial interview was as much as a learning experience for her as it was for me. She learned that she could trust me and I learned to challenge my own conceived notions of how to do proper research.

In terms of my development as a social researcher, this initial interview proved to be quite the turning point for me in other ways as well. I realized that in trying to facilitate an equal and interactive research process, that I was the one who was holding back. I was asking the woman to open up to me yet I was unwilling to fully open up to her. As Ann Oakley, a feminist researcher, puts it: "the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer and

interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (1981: 41). At this point in time, I had to ask myself what it was that I was so scared of. Here is an entry from my personal journal which sounds more like a personal pep talk:

> What's wrong with me? Why did I think the introduction (to the interview) was enough? How can I expect these women to reveal their secrets when I can't reveal my own? Did I actually think that I could do this project without talking about me? Yay right. Don't I want to talk about me? Yay, that's why I'm doing this. This thesis **is** about me. If it helps them to talk, then talk I will.

To foster a more equal relationship, I decided to introduce myself at the beginning of each interview and offer my personal narrative of how and why I came to focus on this research topic. I also decided that during the course of the interview to share and reflect upon my own experiences.

The Formal Interviews

Two formal interviews, each approximately two hours in duration were conducted with each participant. The first interview focussed on their relationships with parents, relationship with friends, dating, marriage, religion, career / education and issues of identity. The second interview was a follow-up interview where I took the transcripts of the first interview back to each woman and asked new questions and clarification of previous answers (Appendix E). For some participants, this interview also included questions about their diaries. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for the participant who lived outside the Victoria and Vancouver areas. I interviewed her via email as this was the most economically feasible option available to us. Although this

method was impersonal in nature, the participant commented that she liked being able to reflect on the questions and answering them at her leisure.

With respect to the location of the interviews, participants were interviewed either in the privacy of their own homes and/or in public areas such as restaurants and coffee shops. The participants who chose to be interviewed at home did so because it was convenient for them. These women usually invited me over when their parents were not home. I found that the interviews were much more detailed and the women very much relaxed. I attribute this in part to the familiar surroundings. Other participants did not wish to be interviewed at home and told me that this was due to lack of privacy and/or simply because they thought it would be fun to go out for lunch. When interviewing in a restaurant, I always reserved the most private booth and requested that our server not disturb us for the remainder of our meal. As a gesture of good faith I always paid for the meal and this was most appreciated by the participants. At first I was concerned that the women may not feel comfortable talking about sensitive issues in a public setting but I found that the opposite had happened. Being in a public place, many other people were present. As a result, the noise level would be quite high and no one could possibly hear our conversation even if they tried. The downside to this was that transcribing proved to be a bit more tedious than usual. I also found that the interview was often rushed at the end because of all the time spent talking (which I should point out that I enjoyed and contributed to) before the actual interview started. For at least one participant, I was only able to get through approximately two thirds the interview and was forced to ask the remaining questions in the follow-up interview.

I began each interview by reading through the consent forms with the participant. I explained her right to withdraw from the research at any point in time with no questions asked, not to answer any questions that she did not wish to answer, and to refuse to have certain parts or even all of the interview audiotaped. I assured her of my commitment to anonymity and explained in some detail the procedures of gathering and disposing of the data.

After the consent forms were signed, I provided the woman with a copy of the Participant Consent Form (without her signature) for her own reference and the original copy of the Researcher Consent Form (with my signature). I then related a short narrative of why and how I came to focus on this topic and what I hoped to accomplish with this research.

Before turning on the audiocassette recorder, I made sure to ask the participant if she had any further questions or concerns regarding what was said or what was about to happen next. I then cautioned her to respect the privacy of any individuals she might name during the course of the interview. I also told the participant that she may interrupt me at any point during the interview and that we could break whenever she liked. Having made the participant comfortable, I then proceeded with the interview schedule.

I began the interview by asking the woman to describe her relationship with her parents. I realize that this was a somewhat emotionally laden question, but considering that I had just finished talking about my own parents and problems that I had experienced, I felt the timing was appropriate. I wanted the woman to feed off my own openness and energy. Also, I did not want to place this question near the middle nor the

end as I wanted to devote a sufficient amount of time to it. Furthermore, I felt that I could not but ask this question at the beginning as almost all of the other questions related back to this one. Indeed, in answering this question, the participants answered some of the other questions without my having to ask them such as those on dating, marriage and friends. This led to a more natural progression of questions whereby the interview was more conversational in nature - something which I had hoped to achieve.

When asking the questions, I tried to be more observant with regard to how the women were feeling. I paid attention to nuances in voice tone, clasping of hands, clearing of the throat, shifting of positions, etc. Quite a few of the women burst into tears and I did my best to comfort them. I would ask the woman if she would like to take a short break or return to the question later or not discuss it at all. Many times I physically reached over and held the woman's hand in mine. At one interview I was so deeply moved by the openness of the woman and her account of her experiences, that my eyes began to well up. These women courageously shared their stories and I shared mine. We "exposed" ourselves to one another and were able to talk about traumatizing events such as suicide.

After the first revelation of attempted suicide, I went home and looked up telephone numbers of referral groups and help agencies. Thereafter, I took this list of contact numbers with me to each interview. During such revelations, I made sure to end the interview with more neutral questions and to end the interview on a more positive note. In such cases, after the interview, I would spend extra time just chit chatting about myself and talking about things like grad school and new movie releases, etc.

At this point I was also concerned that I getting too close to these women and in doing so, I was somehow becoming biased. Qualitative researchers, Kleinmann, Copp and Henderson (1996) argue that students need to violate the widespread belief that researcher's emotions are a bias and thus should be excluded from the data. They write that students "must include their emotional reactions, words, and actions in their notes, just as they would for any other participant in the setting" (Ibid.: 3). Using my journal as a form of emotional release, I wrote about and analyzed my own emotions. I realized that I had to deal with my own feelings and past experiences, my own "demons", before I would be able to proceed as a researcher.

Respondent Feedback

Towards the end of the interviews, I invited the participants to comment on their interview experiences and to collaborate with me in terms of issues I may have inadvertently overlooked. One woman suggested that I perhaps should have included a more detailed question about education and how it fitted into these women's experiences and goals. Other than that the women felt that I had covered all the relevant issues. Some of them took this opportunity to comment about social change:

> I think things will be different for the next generation - they have to be. My kids can date and if they don't want to get married, that's fine with me. I'm not gonna expect these kinds of things from them like my parents did with me.
>
> I'd just like to say that I'm optimistic about the future. Things are changing. Like with my own kids, they'll be allowed to date and stuff. Things will be different - I guarantee it.
>
> I wish things would change more. Things will change, maybe not for us but for the next generation. Hey, you know that East Indian people aren't going to like what you're doing [as a researcher].

> Things are changing but slowly. It's us, the decisions we make with our children, how we live with them and stuff. Our generation has gone by. We've fought for little bits of freedom but there's still a lot more progress to be made and we're the ones who are in a position to make some change.
>
> And there's always going to be a struggle I think until the future generations, maybe or maybe not with our own children, but with us it **will** be. Because we're breaking barriers now and we're the ones who have to take it.

The Diaries

The second data gathering technique that I relied on in this study was that of personal diaries. I believed that diaries would add to the richness of the data as situations would be recorded *as they occurred.* I felt that diaries as personal documents would offer additional insights into the participants' feelings, thoughts and events. The diary was a tool that I intended to use to raise additional questions and queries. However, this part of the research did not go quite as I anticipated it would. Only four of the eleven women agreed to keep a diary. The other women told me that they felt it was too much of a commitment for them, or they didn't want the extra stress of worrying about their parents finding it. To my embarrassment, this latter point was something that I had completely overlooked. Another participant told me that she had no problems so she did not need to keep a diary. She equated diary writing for people with personal problems, as a therapeutic exercise.

To direct the four participants who did agree to keep diaries, I provided a list of topics (see Appendix E). I encouraged each woman to record her thoughts, reflections and experiences in her "diary" for a four week period. In this part of the research, I encountered several problems. First of all, one woman wrote very little, only two pages!

She explained that she simply could not get into the habit of writing in a diary. The other women wrote a fair amount but the problem was with the content itself. I found that very little could be related to the data obtained through the interviews. One woman explained that nothing exciting had happened to her during the month. This could have something to do with the timing. I asked participants to keep diaries during the months of April and May. April was final exams month and May was job searching and/or the start of summer session month for three of the four women. In my proposal, I had stated that I would ask participants to make an extra effort to write in their diaries during or immediately after family functions/socials and holidays such as midterm break. This was not possible due to the delay in finding participants. A final problem was deciphering the handwriting. This took additional time and effort on my part and was quite frustrating at times.

Analyzing the Data

Although I taped the formal interviews, I also took written notes. I jotted down issues that I wished to clarify and new questions that I needed to ask.(without interrupting the participant's train of thought). I also jotted down analytical linkages that I was thinking of at the time. After each interview, I entered these impressions into my journal.

I transcribed each interview by longhand onto note paper and later entered this information into the computer. I filed each interview separately and labelled it by its interview number. Originally, I had intended to type up each interview on the same day that the interview was done. However, this was far from possible, especially for the

interviews that were done in Vancouver where I did not have access to a computer. Also being the two finger typist that I am, the actual typing per interview took me on average three days to complete. Fortunately, I did take notes on top of my notes. I wrote in the margins of the longhand notes and continued to record my impressions in my journal. This gave me an opportunity to reflect upon the process of data collection and helped me to keep in touch with my own feelings and those of the participants. Kirby and McKenna (1989) refer to this as "conceptual baggage" : a record of my personal assumptions, thoughts and ideas about the research question at the beginning and throughout the research process (1989:32). The journal helped me to further conceptualize the problem and to maintain a clear focus on the nature of the study and my role as a researcher.

While searching for participants, I made a table labelled "Contact Sheet" (Appendix B) to keep track of the selected members and all the people that they had approached. As soon as I signed up a participant, I developed a separate file folder for that person. This was the "identity file". I kept the participant's telephone screening interview here and the consent form. I secured this file in a locked filing cabinet in my home to which I had the only key. I formed two other files: documents and personal. The documents file contained the longhand interviews, a copy of the type written interviews and the participants' diaries. Audiocassettes which were not yet transcribed were temporarily stored here. The personal file contained my journal and my notes on notes.

I began analyzing the data by reading through each transcript at least twice. I labelled certain portions of the text with one word headings and jotted notes in the

margins. I took these categories and drew a road map for myself. I realized that these categories could be grouped into common themes. I then returned to the text and colour coded snippets of "talk". Next, I grouped together the similar coloured sections of the different interviews and discovered that certain patterns were emerging. It was at this point that the data began to make some sense.

I had an intuitive understanding of what was going on but, feeling burned out by the whole research process, I was unable to put it all together. As recommended by Lofland and Lofland (1984), I decided to take a few days "off" from the research in order to reflect upon the analysis and develop a fresh perspective. Returning to the data, I realized that these women's lives were riddled with contradictions. Many of these contradictions centred around issues of identity. The women articulated a sense of feeling not quite true to themselves and not having their own lives to lives. Using these initial impressions, I began to reinterpret the data with respect to the way these women saw themselves and the process by which they came to do so.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION: WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS SAID

In this chapter, I introduce the women and present a discussion of the findings of the interviews. Using the women's accounts, I begin by discussing the quality of the relationship these women have with their parents. I then proceed with a discussion of the relationship between family honour (izzat) and the stereotype of good girl/bad girl. I discuss the ways in which some of the woman are able to actively negotiate and resist parental restrictions and the ways in which others learn to cope. Finally, I present some of the contradictions the women experience, the meanings which they assign to these experiences and the implications for their self conceptions.

The Women

The following is an introduction to the eleven women who participated in the research: Amar, Kiren, Jasmine, Raj, Anita, Raman, Sharon, Sukhi, Neena, Rupy, and Bal. To protect their identities, each of the above names is a pseudonym. All of the women were born in Canada except for one (Raj) who came to Canada from India while she was a baby. (See Appendix H for a summary chart of participants.)

Amar

Amar is 19 years old and has a younger brother still in elementary school. Both her father and mother have bachelor degrees from universities in India. Her father is self-employed and her mother is an office employee. Amar attends university and is enrolled in a program that she does not like but remains in to please her parents. For the past few years she's been experiencing problems with her parents. This resulted in her almost leaving home. She has been dating a Punjabi Sikh boy, of a different caste for the past

year and has approached her parents with the intention of getting married to him. She is currently in the process of getting her parents' official approval of their relationship.

Kiren

Kiren is 21 years old and has recently graduated with her undergraduate degree. She plans to enroll in another degree program this fall. She is one-half Punjabi Sikh and one-half Punjabi Hindu. Like Amar, both her parents have bachelor degrees from universities in India. Her father is a retired sawmill worker and her mother a housewife. She is the third child of a family of four, with two brothers and one sister. She was considering pursuing a relationship with someone but decided against it. She believes her parents would be open to her finding someone on her own, provided her choice was the same caste, religion, has an equivalent level of education as her, and is from a respectable family. Otherwise she is expected to have her marriage arranged for her by her parents. For now, school is her top priority.

Jasmine

Jasmine is 18 years old and has one younger brother still in high school. Her father has some high school level education from India and her mother obtained a high school diploma through adult education during her first few years of moving to Canada. Her father is a foreman with a company and her mother works in retail. Jasmine has never dated anyone but is not closed to the possibility in the future. She has just completed her first year of post-secondary studies, but with poor marks. Her parents have told her that if she doesn't do well in school, and gets into a university next year, then she will have to find a job and be prepared to get "married off"(via an arranged marriage).

Raj

Raj is 22 years old and has two older siblings, a sister and brother. She comments that being the youngest, her parents "baby her" a lot. After graduating from high school, Raj was hired at a financial institution. This was a career her parents wanted her to pursue. Her father has a bachelor's degree from a university in India and her mother completed some high school from India. Her dad is an ex-sawmill worker who is now self-employed. Her mother is a housewife. Raj describes herself as having low self esteem as a teen. In recent years, she has gained much confidence and is asserting her right to be independent, having obtained the career her parents wanted her to and being financially independent of them. She convinced her parents to let her do as she pleases, promising that she'll consent to an arranged marriage at the age of 25. She has no intention of getting an arranged marriage at all and plans to postpone her parents' plans for as long as possible. Otherwise she will move out at the first sign of pressure from her parents.

Anita

Anita is 24 years old and has one older sister and a younger brother in his 20s. Her sister is married (arranged) and she expects that she will be "married off" within the next year even though she does not want to. She is not interested in getting married but it is something her parents expect her to do. Her father is a sawmill worker and her mother a restaurant employee. Both parents have completed some high school from India. Anita is completing her final year of an undergraduate program and has been basically working full-time in a job closely related to her studies for the past four years. During her teens, she suffered from depression and had low self esteem. Although Anita rarely

"challenged" her parents, it was her older sister doing all the confronting. Her sister often held her in confidence and as a consequence, Anita endured much stress while growing up. Anita has never dated and does not intend to either. She is relatively happy with her life now and has been feeling more confident about herself but is fearful of getting married.

Raman

Raman at 21 years of age, is the eldest of three. She has two younger sisters, both still in high school. She grew up in a small town. Her father is a sawmill worker and her mother a housewife. Both have some high school education from India. After graduating from high school, Raman completed a one year intensive technical program outside of her hometown. She lives away from home. having found a job outside of her hometown. Although she supports herself and enjoys the freedom of living on her own, she finds that she is still very much subjected to her parents' "rules". Her parents are presently searching for a suitable boy for her to get married to. She suspects that because of her "bad" reputation, they will have problems finding someone for her. She has been in several relationships in the past and revealed that she lost her virginity when she was 15 years old. To make her parents happy, she is willing to have an arranged marriage but is worried that her past will "screw" things up for her and her younger sisters.

Sharon

Sharon is 24 years old, works in retail and has a college diploma. She is the oldest child in her family with a younger sister in college and two brothers in their teens. Her father is a sawmill worker with some high school level education from India. Her mother

works a menial job in farming and has completed some college level education from India. Sharon dated for two months before telling her parents that she had found someone herself. She is officially engaged to this person and by the end of the summer will be married to him.

Sukhi

Sukhi is 23 years old, graduated with her bachelor degree last year, and is planning to return to school this fall for a second degree program. Her father is a sawmill worker with some high school education from India and her mom a housewife with some elementary school level education from India. Sukhi is the eldest of four children, with two younger sisters and one brother. Her sister moved out of the house about two years ago and this event had a major impact on her family. She says that her parents have become more flexible as a consequence in terms of "rules". Sukhi has dated in the past and was involved with someone during this research but has since broken up with him. Her parents have begun the process of finding someone for her but she reports that marriage is the furthest thing from her mind right now and by going back to school, she will be able to delay it.

Neena

Neena is 20 years old and just completed her second year of university. Her father is a sawmill worker and mother a housewife. Both parents have at least some high school level education from India. She has a younger brother and sister, both still in high school. She says that the transition from high school to university, her "secret" boyfriend, and continued problems at home with her parents, especially her father

contributed to her being stressed out last year. She has since ended her relationship with her boyfriend, brought up her grades to an "A" average, and has made school and her parents her top priorities. She expects that after graduation from university, she will have an arranged marriage. She says that this is something she has now accepted for herself.

Rupy

Rupy at 16, is the youngest of all the women I interviewed. She has just completed grade ten in high school. Her father is a sawmill worker and her mother a housewife. Her father has some high school level education from India and her mother has some elementary education from India. She is the youngest in her family with two older sisters and one older brother; all who are still attending school. She reports feeling much stress in her life, worrying about her future (arranged marriage) and wondering what decisions she is supposed to make in order to keep everyone (her parents and extended family) happy.

Bal

Bal is 20 years old and in the second year of a college diploma program. Her father is a sawmill worker and her mother a housewife, both with some high school level education from India. Bal is the second oldest in her family with one older sister, two younger sisters and a younger brother. She describes herself as being "old-house" (old-fashioned or traditional) but to a lesser extent than her parents are. She reports that she has experienced few conflicts with her parents but believes it may simply be that the issues have not come up for her yet. In her own words, she says, "I think maybe the platter hasn't been presented to me yet."

What They Said

Relationship With Parents

I began the interviews by asking the women to discuss their relationships with their parents. The women's responses were quite complex and ranged from "don't know" (Anita and Raman) to "okay" (Amar, Kiren, Raj and Rupy) to "good" (Jasmine, Sukhi, Neena) and "fairly good" (Sharon and Bal). On the whole, with the exception of Amar and Raman, who described feeling much anxiety and tension at the present time, the women reported being happy with the relationship they currently had with their parents.

I asked each woman to comment specifically on her relationship with each parent. Jasmine, Sukhi, Raman, Sharon, Neena, Rupy, and Bal all reported feeling closer to their mothers than their fathers. Amar told me that in her early teens she felt closer to her father but now does not feel close let alone closer, to any parent. She describes her relationship with both parents as characterized by constant arguing. Anita reported feeling closer to her mother in the past but revealed that she is now closer to her father. Kiren reported feeling always close but not closer to any one parent. Raj said she never felt close to either parent at all.

In describing their feelings of "closeness", the women commented about the type of communication they had with their parents. All the women offered similar comments about being able to discuss family or household matters and personal problems or worries with their mothers but only being able to talk about general school or work related matters with their fathers. Most of the women also mentioned that there were certain issues which they just simply could not discuss at all, with either parent. These issues

frequently included socializing privileges and dating. In the following, Amar describes her relationship in terms of the recent verbal fights she has been experiencing with her parents. She reports that much of this tension has been building up since graduating from high-school and many arguments have been over her socializing activities. Recently, things have gotten worse since she told them about her "secret" boyfriend:

> I guess I can say it's "**o-kay**" [emphasis]. I mean there are times when I can tell my parents [pause] stuff but then lately I've been just feeling like I can't tell them anything. Just because it's always resulting in a fight. So there's just lots of tension but I mean there's lots of goofing around in the sense we don't bring up an actual issue, everything is fine, right? I mean we were watching our soap operas, everything is fine. When I'm just wrestling with my Dad for no reason [I laugh, smile, nod], everything is fine, right. When it comes to like issues as in like who I want to marry, ah what I want to be when I grow up, so those types of issues, that's when it starts getting a little bit tense. Like if I want to go out or something, I usually tell my mom because my Dad's not at home in the evenings and it's easier. I usually tell my Mom and she'll say tell your dad. I get more nervous when I have to tell my Dad. He yells a lot ... Sometimes, I feel like I've lost. I don't like to talk to them about things anymore just because I don't want to like upset them.

Kiren describes her relationship with her parents not in terms of open conflict but interpersonal conflict. She reports having experienced few open arguments with her parents while growing up but questions the restrictions her parents have placed on her:

> I would say it's alright - okay. I have some restrictions. My parents are **very** traditional [emphasis]. My parents are strict in some ways and stuff. I respect that because that's the way they believe things should be and you know, I respect how they've been raised. In some ways my parents are stricter than other parents regarding dating and stuff like that, but then in other ways, they are quite flexible. Say like the double standard and I have leniency that way. You know, there are good sides and bad sides to my parents and I just accept the way they are and the way they want me to be raised, my value system and stuff.

Jasmine reports arguing much less with her parents about the restrictions over the years. She describes feeling closer to her mom in the following:

> I have a good relationship. Usually, when we spend time together, we have fun. I feel I can talk to them about the general stuff such as school, my dreams, my goals

> and about my friends. I would not talk to them about guys, relatives or my personal problems...I feel closer to my mother. We are quite alike. Plus it ends up I spend more time with her than I do with my dad. I would just rather discuss the issues with my mom- it's more convenient and she is more open-minded about things unlike my dad.

Raj responds with talk of not being able to "trust" either parent with her feelings on certain issues. She believes if they knew how she felt about certain issues such as dating (which she views as being acceptable and a possibility for herself), they would push her to get married right away:

> Good but not excellent. Um, pretty okay I guess. Sometimes me and my father are really great and sometimes, my mom. I don't trust them with anything I do. I just don't trust them. There are some things that I want to tell them but I don't because I know they won't approve of it; they won't allow it you know. The only thing I discuss with my parents is work, the hell I go through. That's the only thing. I don't tell them anything about my life - my social life, my friends. They baby me all the time and I hate it. I wish I could talk to them about dating, going out and whatever but I can't. I'd rather not I don't even talk to my sister because it would be more of a headache I think. They'd probably get all negative about it.

Anita says she has few open conflicts with her parents and has come to accept the restrictions. She also told me that in the past, both she and her mother were physically and emotionally abused by her father. Her own abuse by her father lasted a little over a year and ended when she tried to commit suicide at the age of sixteen. She says her father has completely changed to the extent that she now feels closer to her him instead of her mother. Here are a few of her general comments:

> I now have a very open relationship with my parents where I can talk to them about almost anything but not when I was in high school. Back then, I felt I was only able to talk to my mom because my dad would always get angry and stuff. He just didn't understand that we'd want to go out and hang with friends once in awhile. He was always really angry and stuff and used to take it out on the family...Now, I'm closer to my dad. I think it's because he regrets the things he's done in the past and has changed, like is more open about things. Whereas my mom, she hasn't become more

> open -minded over the years. I think she's become bitter because of all the stuff in the past.

Raman assesses the quality of her relationship with her parents in terms of the intensity of the arguments she has with them. Even though she lives on her own, in a different city, away from the scrutiny of her parents, she still finds herself arguing with them, usually over the phone. She told me that she experienced much open conflict with her parents during her high-school years. In the following description, she talks about an incident that radically changed her relationship with her father:

> Well, with my parents, basically because I'm living here (away from home) they think I should go to work, come home and do nothing! We argue about the littlest things sometimes, you know. Say if I'm going to a party, it's like what?!? Who's party are you going to? Where? How come you make all these friends? My mom's more cooler but my dad's a lot more stricter... I stopped talking to my dad about [pause] when I think was in grade 11 or 12. I got caught skipping with a boy and so we haven't been close at all ... I am talking to him now though but it's not like a big conversation or anything like that. It's like the bare minimum; "Hi! How's it going? How's work?" Just basic stuff...With my mom, we talk about family and relatives and stuff. I'm well, I'm happy with my mom. But I really wish they were more open-minded. I wish they would be more open, maybe more understanding. But I'll get over that.

Sukhi, like Anita also told me that she and her mother experienced emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her father. The abuse lasted for a period of approximately five years, beginning when she was fourteen. She also reports that her father has changed for the better and says she has been able to forgive him for the suffering he caused her and her family in the past. She admits that there still are problems with her wanting to go out and coming home late at night but believes these problems are workable:

> It's better now. But, we went through a really rough period during the teen-age years. We still have conflicts but we deal with them better. They're usually about going out. Our relationship's very good, not excellent, we still have problems. We're still working on them... There are a lot of little issues we can discuss but there

> are certain issues we can't discuss like dating, personal relationships (laughs). Other then that there's nothing really I can't talk to them about... With my dad we share politics, current events, gardening and stuff. With my mom it's other things, relatives and family... They could be more understanding from their point. They're traditional when I comes to certain aspects. I'm just more open than they are.

Neena describes her relationship as being far different now than what it was in the past. She talks about the restrictions her parents placed on her and the constant fighting of past years:

> It's good now I guess. It was pretty bad up until two years...I think I've changed some and so have they. Our relationship is much more open now, stable, like we don't fight much anymore and don't really have any issues to fight over.
> I think I feel closer to my mom than my dad, I've never been really able to talk to my dad and I don't think he's ever understood me. He's just way too traditional. My mom always tried to be there for me, defending me and what I did, to my dad. She gave me more leeway than my dad. Basically, he just dictated what to do or how things should be done like saying "no" to anything I asked, like going out with friends, going to the movies, or to birthday parties or studying late at school. Now, I have an open relationship with my parents in that I can talk about school stuff or marriage stuff or family stuff you know. I have a more open relationship with my mom. We talk a lot about the culture, the restrictions we have put on us because we're women. It's not open in the sense that they don't know about the things I've done in the past like seeing someone once and stuff.

Rupy, the youngest women in the study, talks about feeling closer to her mom. She reports rarely arguing with her parents but feeling some inner tension over her dad's reluctance to being less "traditional."

> I'm more closer with my mom because she's really understanding and stuff. My dad's like really old-fashioned and strict if you know what I mean. He's like this is the way it is and that's it. My mom's more open to options. She'll let me do things...she listens. My dad will be like why, what for and like more questions...My mom's more understanding. I think her parents weren't as strict as my dad's or something. Like I can go up and talk to my mom but with my dad it's like should I or shouldn't I? ... I'm sort of happy with the relationship I have with my parents. I just wish they were more understanding and not so old-fashioned. Like be a lot more open to our opinions and not like you have to listen to us, you have to do this and that, you're nothing, don't talk back and listen.

Sharon reported having a fairly good relationship with her parents while growing up but did mention experiencing some tension during her teens when she was prohibited from going out with friends, attending dances and attending graduation. She summarizes her relationship as follows:

> I think I have good communication with my parents. At some points they didn't understand why I wanted to go out and this and that. But as soon as I hit college and I had responsibilities, they could trust me and everything. And then they started saying you could do this and that or whatever, but you need to trust me or it'll be a big mistake. We're here for you. You can come to us with any problems. You can talk to us. They're very open about it. There was no yelling. They sat me down and said if this what you want then fine...That's all they say to us: you're our children and we just want to see you happy and everything. I can discuss anything, any detail. If it's something personal, I go to my mother. I think I feel closer to my mom. But my father's there for me as well.

Bal, in talking about her relationship with her parents, says she has never experienced any problems with her parents but questions why this is so. Here she describes talking to her dad through her mom and tries to explain why she feels closer to her mother:

> Um I think I'm more closer to my mom because she is a female. She's here home more because she is a housewife whereas my dad's more like at work and when he's home it's like his job to deal with my brother and my mom's job to deal with us...there are certain private things that I can't talk to him about ... we don't talk to each other directly, it's like mediated type of thing. I talk to my mom first and then she talks to my dad for me ... My dad's more flexible now but I think his values still haven't changed. He's more "old house", like traditional, very arranged marriage kind of thing, no dating at all, boys and girls can't mix, like that. I think I'm like that as well and it really bugs me. Like why am I like that?

From the women's accounts, it is apparent that the fathers are assigned an important role in the women's lives. Fathers seem to be the authority figures in the household, having more influence than the wives and the daughters. They assert their dominance through anger, whether this is in the form of yelling or physical and emotional abuse as in the cases of Anita and Sukhi.

This talk of their fathers came up continuously through the interviews. In the above, the women who commented that their parents could be "more understanding", often made specific references to their fathers. This feeling of not being well understood is well documented by the literature on adolescence (Brah 1978: 197) but little attention has been given to its relation to gender. I asked the women what they meant by "more understanding" and they told me that they wished their parents would give them more leeway with regard to issues such as dating and socializing with friends. In their explanations, these women used the terms "strict" and/or "traditional" to predominantly describe their fathers and used phrases such as "Canadian", "modern" and "more open minded" to describe themselves. The women in interpreting their experiences and assigning meanings to their interactions with their fathers, obviously were working from the frame of reference of their peers and the broader "Canadian" community. The only exception to this self-typing was Bal who described herself as being "old house" like her parents. I think this feeling of not being understood can offer some insights to the pattern of gender-specific talk mentioned earlier in this section. When, I asked the women why they felt that they could talk to their mothers about personal issues and not their fathers, they attributed this to being able to spend more time with their mothers as opposed to with their fathers. This is consistent with the literature which documents that mothers, compared to fathers, spend more time with their adolescents and experience more closer relationships with their children than do fathers (Demo 1991: 112). However, I propose there is a deeper significance to this gender-specific pattern of interaction. The women themselves explained that they felt "talking" was not possible because their fathers often

responded with anger. I interpret talk here to mean a dialogue, of "talking things through". Bal says she feels closer to her mother because "she is a female." I take this to mean that Bal feels her mother is more understanding or sympathetic because as a woman she may share similar experiences. Also, both are in subordinate positions compared to the father and this may make it easier for a young daughter to approach her mother and initiate a dialogue than her father. Thus, I argue that patterns of interaction are gendered in this way.

Being a "good girl": Izzat (Family Honour)

During their teens, the women reported having restrictions such as no cutting hair, coming straight home after school, absolutely no make-up and very limited socializing. The exception being Rupy who as the only woman still in high-school has to deal with these restrictions now. Some of the women, Raj, Anita, Raman, Neena and Sharon, were either not allowed to attend graduation or had to argue vehemently with their parents to go. After completing high school, the women said that these restrictions were lifted. The women attributed this to having gained their parents' trust, by having been obedient in the past. Neena explained gaining her parents' trust by being more obedient now and therefore less "rebellious" than in the past. Raman believed she gained her parents' trust by appearing to be less "rebellious" now. When I asked these women what they meant by "rebellious", they made reference to the stereotype of a "good girl". Other women also made references to the "good girl" image, *izzat* (family honour) and its contrast, *basti* (dishonour) when explaining why their parents enforced the restrictions of no boyfriends, no male friends, no talking on the phone with males nor receiving phone

calls from males, no clubbing / attending dances, no smoking, no drinking (although exception is made for some of the women for special family occasions), no violation of curfews and of course, no breaking these rules. When I asked Sukhi what a good girl was, she said:

> Somebody who stays at home, respects their parents, goes to school, doesn't really go out or hang with guys and stuff like that. You still do things with people in your own culture, you don't throw it all away. Someone who goes to family functions and temple, speaks Punjabi, stuff like that. People respect that in our culture.

Neena offered a similar reply but also mentioned the importance of other (Indian) people in being able to label a girl as "good" or "bad":

> Someone who's never dated, marries who her parents want her to, does good in school, doesn't drink, doesn't go clubbing, does whatever her parents want her to do, does all the housework you know. Someone who doesn't give other people an excuse to talk about her, being obedient and stuff.

I suspected there was more meaning to this and so I probed further. Each woman explained that maintaining a good girl image was not only important for her own personal reputation but her entire family's as well. Raman was the only woman in the study who "got caught" dating when she was sixteen, was labelled a "bad girl" by members of the community. She talks about the importance of reputation and how once tarnished, can never be fixed in the following:

> As I was growing up, the guys I hung out with, sex at an early age, I have made a lot of mistakes in the past and I wish I hadn't done them and today the things I do today, like clubbing and drinking. I think oh well I have a bad reputation anyway, who cares. I don't think I'm a tramp at all because I'm not. But uh, I don't go sleeping around either. I don't do that but that's the image I've gotten from people. I mean people still think I'm a slut, to this day, right. I went to school, I made a life for myself. Because when I was 19, I started taking care of myself. But I can't change that image, once it's there, it's there. My worry is that when I get married, it's going to haunt me. Like, you know if I bring my husband back home and some guy comes up and says "well, did you know that I slept with your wife." They're going to say that and what am I going to do then? I only slept with two people there and all of a

> sudden, I have ten guys saying they slept with me. They're all like "oh yay, I slept with her. She's easy" or whatever. That's my worry now.

Note the importance that "other people" have in the self-definition of young women. It is other Indian people, members of the ethnic community who are the ones with the power to define through gossip. Jasmine makes similar comments about the role that "other" people have in defining one's reputation. And, although like the other women in the study, she does not agree with this feminine stereotype of the good girl, she finds herself conforming to it in practice:

> I think my parents don't want me to go to hang around with guys and go clubbing is because if other East Indians saw me, they might give me a bad name which could catch up with me later in my life when I am going to get married. I have this desire to keep my good image in the family, not that I do anything wrong. I just wish they wouldn't worry so much about what other people think.

Being labelled a "bad" girl has serious consequences. It can ruin a young woman's prospective marriage chances and even those of her siblings. The entire family's name is "blackened" and the father held responsible for failing to raise his daughter in a proper moral way. It is a way for the community to regulate the behaviour of young women and in practice it seems the women have little choice but to conform to this stereotype to some extent. As Raman states:

> Even my sisters, I mean just a little while ago, people started calling her [the older one] a slut just because they think I'm one. I like really cried that day. I was like "Oh my god. This isn't gonna end." To a certain degree, I'm screwing up for them too. Because I made a mistake, they might have to pay for it.

In talking about the good girl image, the women pointed out that no equivalent stereotype existed for young men. The women complained that young men (or even married and/or older men) did not worry about their reputations in the same way that women (whether

married or single) did. They angrily talked about the unfairness of their own situations and how they observed that young men, such as their own brothers and cousins were granted more privileges and/or had less restrictions placed on them by their parents. This practice or set of behaviours as acted out by adult members of the Indian community was referred to as the "double standard." The women are not only expected to act in gendered ways but are treated or perceived as being different because of their gender. In the following account, Sharon summarizes how the double standard is practiced and even offers an explanation as to why it is practiced. She talks about the economic power that Indian men have traditionally held over women and their children. She also alludes to this contradiction of women's bodies as a site of power and powerlessness. Women exercise power in the sense that they reproduce children, give birth to boys who are the privileged sex. Men are the ones who inherit the family property, whether through birth or marriage (i.e. accumulate wealth through wife's dowry). Yet women's bodies are also quite fragile in that they symbolize family honour and can give birth to children out of wedlock. Here are Sharon's general comments:

> People [Indian] don't understand. We're the ones who bring them (boys) into the world. And we can choose to not bring them too. It's power but they don't understand that right. I do believe there's people out there that think that the guy was dating someone and they got married but my cousin was dating someone but they didn't allow that to happen so she got an arranged marriage instead. They let the guy marry who he wanted but they didn't let her marry the guy she was seeing which was a friend of her brother's. That could or maybe not have been a problem. I've seen it happen. Boys can make mistakes as well but why should they get this preferential treatment and blame it on the girl if she makes the same mistake. If a guy does something, it's fine. But if a girls does something, bang, she's in trouble. The husband has the power over the wife or the brother has the power over the sisters. He has to be the one that supports the family. I guess the man is the one who supports everybody and brings in the money. The woman if she works 12 hours, she has to do the housework and the guy comes home, sits on the sofa and gets his wife to do everything. Males don't have more power. They're given it over women.

Thus as Sharon states, men simply do not have more power over women, they are **assigned** this power. This power is not something men naturally have, but is socially constructed. To further understand how and why these different expectations are placed on young Indian men and women, I present Sukhi's comments below. She talks about the responsibility women are given in guarding the family name. In her own words, she explains:

> Males are allowed to run around kind of thing. Oh yay, you can go out, you can go drinking, be a man. It's like be a man if you can chug down the whisky, right. Girls on the other hand, it's like no, go clean the house. In general, guys **are** allowed to date. They're like "yay", you know, pat on the back kind of thing, "Oh what did you do with this girl?"... I think it's all about the name, cause girls carry the name. If a girl's seen out doing something "bad" then that reflects on her family. Because people are **gonna** talk and people care. They're like, "Oh my god, **your** daughter!?" Guys won't want to marry her because they think she's not marriageable material. In reality, it's just so far-fetched. Just because she's seen with a guy, they put two and two together and they totally gossip in the whole culture and they're at the mercy of anybody right. Cause then her parents are gonna think, "Oh she can't marry a decent guy, we'll marry her to the first guy that comes along." She'll think of herself as a second-class citizen and then she'll be at the mercy of this guy [her husband] and he can do whatever, he'll be like yay and throw it back in her face and I know people who are going through that because they made one mistake, they were told that they were second class citizens. We're the ones who carry on the names. It's very important in our households- the name thing. We're the ones who are going to be the future mothers. We're the ones who carry it on kind of thing with our families. It's very hard to explain. Just because we carry such an importance that I guess, women can't be sleeping around but guys can before they get married. We're supposed to be inexperienced in that way. Our parents are supposed to shelter us and pass us on to our husbands like some innocent little dolls.

This notion of daughters as carriers of the family name was one that recurred throughout the interviews. Neena's comments help to provide further insights. She also talks about what it means to be a daughter. On face value, it means cooking *rotis* (Indian bread), cleaning, doing the housework, serving tea to guests, and catering to the needs of other

people. But there is a deeper significance to the meaning associated with daughters as Neena explains:

> I mean as daughters we're almost trained to be obedient, to do what our parents want us to do. And it's a hell of a responsibility. I didn't ask to be born a girl but I am and with it comes this responsibility of carrying on the family name, the *izzat*. You have to make sure that you don't do anything to blacken your reputation (you know, *basti*) or to disappoint your parents. I don't understand why we have to be so East Indian-ish. I mean we're living her in Canada and not India. Things are changing but slowly. A lot of kids are saying no to arranged marriages and trying to satisfy their parents by at least marrying someone of the same religious background, Sikh if not the same caste. But I think it's somehow different for girls. If they date, they can easily be labelled as sluts but not guys - they get away with a lot more. I'm not really sure how but guys seem to have more freedom than girls. It's something to do with the fact that people in the culture feel blessed when a boy is born into the family but burdened if it's a girl. It's difficult to put into words I don't know why it happens but it does. I guess with a girl, like they say, she's like **given away** at marriage [original emphasis]. With respect to my male cousins, they're quite chauvinistic. Most of them get drunk and have girlfriends. They're always giving me this attitude like they have to protect me or something. "Okay, if some guy ever bugs you, just let us know and we'll take care of it, or if you ever like some guy let us know and we'll check him out." Like give me a break (laughs). I can take care of myself thank-you. What hypocrites!

Thus, being a daughter means simply more than having one's behaviour regulated by parents and the larger community as a whole. Women as daughters are expected to be obedient and moral and perceived as needing male protection. Ironically, although an Indian woman takes on her father's name at birth and then her husband's at marriage, she **is** the cultural vessel of that name. As a consequence, she is not only responsible for guarding that family name but also in turn is guarded by males, whether her father or husband.

Resistance In Relation to the Family / Sikh Community

Despite the importance attached to personal reputations and their family names, these women often lied to their parents about their social activities and engaged in

behaviours they knew their parents would strongly disapprove of. To avoid the label of "bad girl" or bad reputation, and to keep both their parents and themselves happy, many women engaged in lies and secrecy. It was their way of resisting "the rules", the power that members of the Indian community and their parents wielded over them. Such covert activities occurred outside the home, with peers. In fact, six of the eleven women revealed that they defied their parents by violating the rule of no dating. Amar, Sharon, Raman, Sukhi, Raj, and Neena all admitted to having secretly pursued relationships with someone in the past and/or at the present time.

All the women narrated instances of when they told their parents little white lies or kept things from them. The white lies consisted of leaving out details of exactly who would be at a function (e.g. omit the fact that boys would be attending too), who they were going out with, where, why and what they would be doing there. Many of the women relied on their knowledge of "Canadian" culture to successfully carry out their covert activities. This knowledge is possibly shared by their own parents but the point is that these women successfully use this knowledge to serve their own needs. Here, Raj talks about leaving a fake message on the answering machine one time so her parents would not find out that she had not left town:

> I say I'm going out to dinner with girls. If they go where you're going? I go well to dinner then to a movie and maybe bowling or pool. Like we will do that but then sometimes after pool we go out to the clubs and we stay there till 2 AM...Once I told them I was going to go visit a friend out of town but I wasn't. I crashed at a friend's place in town and then I and my friend left a fake message on her answering machine, saying we wouldn't be home and we'd gone out of town. My parents told me to call them when I arrived at the supposed place and I couldn't talk them out of it. So, I called my parents on my cell so they wouldn't be able to trace the phone number (they got call display you know), and catch me in the lie.

Raman whose parents frequently call her at night to make sure she is home, often uses the "I turned the telephone ringer off" trick:

> Like when they (parents) phone at 10 p.m. and I'm not at home because I'm out with friends, clubbing or whatever. I'm like, "oh, I worked over-time again." Like its so stupid. I turned the ringer off. Why did you turn it off? No, keep it on. What if there's an emergency at night? No, but I want to sleep. Not only that, they can call my roommate too right to see if I'm home or not. But they haven't done it yet but you never know.

Sukhi never had her own telephone line while living away from home for university but convinced her parents that her friend's phone number was hers.

> My parents don't know about a lot of the stuff I do like drinking, smoking and clubbing although I think they have an intuitive sense that I do it. Like while I was living away at university, I lived with male roommates and my parents had like no idea. I'd get them to call my (girl) friend's house and that's where they thought I was staying. I'd call them back later. It's a good thing they never visited.

Neena describes using her knowledge of the university system to convince her parents that her school library, including Friday, did not close until late evening.

> Sometimes I've told my parents that I was late because I had to drop somebody off home or there was traffic or an accident somewhere. I've often used the excuse that I have studying or library stuff to do - the library at school doesn't close until like 11 p.m. on most days. I've gotten in trouble for being late lots of times. Usually my parents wait up for me but they've kind of stopped doing that. I just get lectured the next day or my dad gets mad and stops talking to me for a few days. I can handle that...I'm not allowed to have male friends calling me at home and when they do, my dad usually answers and he's really rude on the phone and asks them who they are and why they're calling. Usually I call them back like late at night when everyone's asleep. I tell my parents it's my lab partner or something.

Some of the women also resisted in more overt ways. For example, the threat of leaving home gave Amar, Sukhi and Raj quite a bit of bargaining power. For example, Amar narrated an incident that occurred relatively recently. She approached her parents with the revelation that she had been dating someone secretly and wanted to marry this

person. Her parents were shocked to say the least, that she had been dating without their knowledge and that the person she wanted to marry although of Sikh background was of a different caste. A few days later, she said she felt that things were just too much for her to handle and decided to move out of her parents' home. She reconsidered her decision after her mother started crying and her father promised to make an effort to change things. The following is an excerpt from the interview. I have also included my own voice:

> *But going back to that night, you packed your bags, and came downstairs and told your parents?*
> I'm moving and my mom started crying my dad just went nuts.
> *Nuts?*
> Yay, like lots of yelling and asking me if I've lost my mind or something.
> *Where were you going to go?*
> I was going to stay at a friend's house. They didn't take me seriously so I wasn't gonna stay in a house where I'm an adult and I'm not being taken seriously and my views were not being respected. I mean why send me to school if you don't want me to have an opinion? I've been educated and therefore, I have an opinion. If you didn't want me to have an opinion, why did you send me to private school? Why do you pay for my school fees now? Cause my dad's like we send you to school and it's those psychology classes that are destroying your brain. I'm just like what are you talking about? Maybe you should take a few of those psychology classes.
> *So, you came downstairs and what changed your mind?*
> Well, I didn't want my mom to go back to her depression and once again it would have been because of me. And my dad said that they had already sent someone over to talk to [boyfriend]'s dad. That they were already looking into things. He said that he'll go and personally talk to [boyfriend's] dad once everything else checks out.
> *Checking out?*
> You know, that they're a good family, well off and are okay with the marriage going through and stuff.

Sukhi, after returning from university sat her parents down and said to them:

> It was my personal decision to come back. I've had all this freedom and if you don't give me any freedom then I'll pack my bags. I can leave. This is the way it is. I need to go out once a week. Go and hang out with my friends and have a good time. It's not like I'm asking for every day of the week.

Inherent in this threat was that she could leave **too**. Her younger sister had already moved out a few months earlier and if her parents were not willing to make some compromises, she would have no qualms about leaving home.

Raj describes yelling back at her parents and explains how she used her new found economic security to frequently threaten her parents with moving out:

> In high-school my curfew used to be 8 p.m. but I never went out not even during the week-ends. Now most of the time I don't come home, I crash at someone's house. I think it's pretty good now than like back then because they know that I'm not gonna tolerate it, like for me to come home so early, I'm going to do what I want. I'm not gonna do what they say. I've made it very clear to them. I have a lot of money in the bank, I have a lot of credit cards, and I've got a steady job, you won't even see me. I'm old enough to do what I want now.

In addition to resisting in practice, I found that the women also resisted at the level of ideology. Each woman participated in this form of resistance. For example, the women rejected the belief that marriage was a necessary rite of passage for Sikh women (and men for that matter). All the women talked of the next generation and expressed much optimism that things would be different for their own children in the future. Most of the women said that they would not mind if their children dated or married persons of a different culture, caste or religion. The only exceptions to this way of thinking were Sharon and Bal. These women said they would prefer it if their children would marry within the culture but would not force it upon them. The women also rejected the stereotype of the "good girl". For example, they did not feel that dating, drinking or clubbing was "bad" and that girls who engaged in such activities were necessarily "bad" as well, including themselves. The meanings they assigned to these activities were

different (and more positive) from those that their parents assigned but similar to those shared with their peers, whether Indian or non-Indian.

Resistance In Relation to the "Canadian" Community

So far, the resistance I have spoken of is that in relation to parents and members of the ethnic community. In talking about their experiences of growing up in Canadian society, many women spoke of racism. These experiences were quite painful for some of these women and based on their accounts, most of the women reacted by identifying more with their own culture, being proud of it or simply renouncing it and embracing the "white" culture instead. Some of the women who identified more with their ethnic culture, counted East Indians as their closest friends and often described themselves as feeling safe or comfortable with similar ethnic others. In the following, Kiren talks about her feelings on the topic in general:

> Well it really hurts to be honest. It makes me upset that I even have to go through it but I guess I should be getting used to it and it'll just make me a stronger person. It makes me really resistant to um, especially becoming friends with white people cause I guess when I get suspicions or kind of feel a bit of anxiety whether they're going to be racists themselves when I get to know them. I want to hang out with people who are like me, Indian. So, I can't get hurt and also cause I don't have to explain things to them. Like at work. I've made a bunch of white friends there and I find it to be a hassle. My best friends are Indian. I feel closer to them because they understand the culture and they've experienced it [racism] too. I don't have to explain things. I can say I need to be home by this time. I can't go downtown walking around with a guy. I can say I heard this [Indian] song and they know what I'm talking about.

I asked Jasmine about the ethnicity of her friends and like Kiren, she explained that she felt comfortable being with other East Indians because they shared similar experiences :

> My best friends are East Indians because I can talk to them about stuff like my parents and my relatives and the rules I have to live with. They understand about all this stuff. We've gone through the same experiences together like racism and stuff.

Sharon also made similar comments:

> I think it's because of racism. I didn't want to hang around people who judged me because of my skin colour. They ask such stupid questions and make it sound like their culture is better. That they could understand what I was going through and they were going through the same thing whereas white people they didn't have many concerns.

I asked Sharon what she meant by "stupid" questions and she told me that these were questions that made her feel uncomfortable and sometimes ashamed about the culture. An example she gave was of the arranged marriage and as she said, "White people thought it was like backwards or something. And I guess I think it's too."

When I asked Rupy about whether she had ever had any experiences with respect to racism, she narrated a recent incident. She told me that she was proud of her Indian culture and said she felt she could relate to Indian people more than "whites":

> Yay, I just had this one incident a couple of months ago. Me and my sister were walking, we were going to return a movie and these white guys go, Hindu-Pakis that and that. I feel angry like why are they doing that. I feel angry like why are they doing that. I feel closer to my East Indian friends, I think it's rude but I have to accept the fact that there are racist people out there and there's nothing I can do about it. I don't feel less of it like I want to kill myself because I'm brown or whatever. Why should I hate my culture? It's not my fault that person is racist towards me. At my school, because of racism and stuff my close friends are East Indians - I can relate to them.

Bal told me that most of her friends are "coloured" and that she feels uncomfortable around noncoloured people. Although she does not attribute this directly to racism, she does talk about feeling different from "white" people:

> When I was little, like "Hey you little paki!" Big time racism. Lots of name calling. It still pisses me off. You can still see it in the job market today. I'm doing one of my practicums and I feel really weird because they're all white. They were talking a certain way and about a certain topic and I felt like what the hell are they talking about? I felt like I wasn't there. I feel totally isolated in those types of situations. Sometimes it makes me feel outside the group and I don't feel like I can relate to these people.

Kiren, Jasmine, Sharon, Rupy and Bal seemed to resist racism by surrounding themselves with other Indian and/or coloured people. These women also talked about feeling proud of their culture.

On the other hand, some women said racism made them reject their own culture and people. They preferred to make friends with nonEast Indians. They said that while growing up, they often wished they were born white. They directed their anger at the Indian culture. Although they report that they no longer harboured such sentiments and now feel comfortable with their ethnic background and identify with it to some extent. Neena talks about wishing she was white when she was younger and how her parents' restrictions combined with her experiences of racism made her hate the Indian culture:

> I've had lots of experiences like at school while I was growing up, in the shopping malls with my parents. I've been called names like Hindu, Paki which is really stupid because I'm neither. White people can just be so stupid. I've had kids push me around and stuff too, most of it in elementary school but I always stood my ground. Racism in general has affected me when I was little, I used to ask why I had to be born brown, different? In high-school I used to wish I was white. I figured that I wouldn't have the problems I was having like I'd be allowed to go to dances and have a boyfriend and not the stupid arguments I had with my parents or the feeling of embarrassment at school when I couldn't go for a skiing week-end retreat, an academic symposium that I had won as one of the top students in my high-school or whatever. I really started hating my culture or at least what it represented - you know, being different and all. I used to avoid being friends with East Indians. I only wanted to be surrounded by white people, accepted as one or them.

The same thing also happened to Amar:

> When people call me names like "Paki or Hindoo", I'm just like, "What you'd say? Just f---- off!" I always say something back. I don't take it now that I'm older. But like it's been bad for me, I mean I really avoided being friends with other East Indians because I just didn't want people to look at me like that, you know what I mean?

Raj talks about her Indian name as sounding weird and the focus of constant ridicule during elementary school and high school. She also describes surrounding herself with "white" friends" in her quest to be like everyone else:

> I had tons of it [racism]. I was called nigger, paki. I know kids are cruel but when people called me stuff like that, I carried it for a long time. I remember one girl in elementary school used to run over my feet all the time with her bike and used to tell me I was dirty and I should go home and take a bath. I don't know why she used to do that. Like cause my name was different? Cause I look different? I mean it's something I had to live with. Like I told you before, I used to wish I was white and I really hated my parents and the culture. I really felt uncomfortable hanging around with Indian people. I had this kind of phobia [of East Indians]. It's only like in the last year or so that I've begun being friends with East Indian people.

Neena, Amar and Raj surrounded themselves with "white" people and avoided being friends with other East Indians. These women talk of wishing to be white and directed anger at the Indian culture.

With respect to the remaining women, their interpretations of their experiences differed from both sets of women above. Raman told me that her best friend was East Indian but her friends in general were of mixed backgrounds. She said that she did not find herself gravitating to people of any particular background. This may have something to do with what she told me about not having had any extreme experiences of racism while growing up. Sukhi told me that she prefers hanging around white people but says this is because they are more similar to her in terms of attitudes and not because of the racism she has experienced. Unlike Raman, she talked about being proud of her culture. In the following, she talks about the effort the Sikh community puts in staging the annual Basakhi parade held in Vancouver:

> Basically, I've come to the conclusion that I don't take it personally. If somebody doesn't want to get to know me because of the colour of my skin, cause of my religion, or what I believe in. Like me for who you are or you don't. Racism has

> made me a stronger person. I'm proud of what my culture's done. Like Basakhi [annual Sikh parade held in Vancouver to commemorate the birth of the first Guru], it's great. People are willing to pay money, help out with the community. The community's decided that all the left-over *rotis* [Indian bread] should go to the shelter. Anyone can walk off the street and have *langar* [charity dinner] tonight. It's always open how many people do that? How many religions actually offer that?

Finally, I asked Anita about her experiences. She reported serious effects of racism with regard to her own self development. I asked her if she felt being comfortable around people of any particular background and she stated that she did not feel comfortable being around people in general:

> My elementary school was totally racist - the kids. They would call my sister and me names like "Paki" and stuff. We used to yell back at them and call them names too. It's taken me a long time to work through it all. I just wanted to be like normal, like the other kids at school but I guess that wasn't going to happen [laughs]. I wish it didn't happen because I became very quiet and shy. Kids were really mean and my self-esteem was very low. In high school I couldn't believe it when people talked to me and I was popular. It's even hard for me to talk to people now. I don't have very many close friends.

In the above accounts, when talking about themselves, the women often used the phrase "East Indian". Kiren was the only one who used the term "Indian". When asked about this preference she explained, "Columbus was the one who made the mistake, we're the Indians he was looking for." As indicated by their use of language, the women were conscious of being different. To describe the dominant society, they used the oppositional categories of "white" or "Canadian" and quite a few of them spoke about wanting to be "normal" or "white". Many women described feeling different or not the same as everyone else, i.e. white individuals. But what I would like to draw attention to is the fact that many of the women, especially as described during their teen years believed that in order to be "white", they could not be "ethnic" or "Indian". It is either

one or the other. Although a few women, Sukhi and Anita, seemed to have negotiated a less exclusive identity whereby they could be both. Thus, racism has had a very negative impact on many of these women's identities, leading to low self-esteem in some and an increase in or awareness of ethnic pride in others. I argue that the actions of rejecting the culture or identifying more with it and its people, are forms of resistance. These two strategies, although very different, were forged in response to the power exercised by the dominant "white" majority.

Coping Strategies

Many of the women in this study had either experienced much stress in their lives and/or seemed to be experiencing stress now. Stress consisted primarily of interpersonal conflicts and/or open conflicts with parents. In dealing with the stress they experienced, the women adopted various coping[12] strategies. To aid in the analysis of this data, I borrowed child researcher Olah's (1995) descriptions of coping strategies.

Olah, using empirically-derived coping dimensions, categorizes the different coping strategies of adolescents in terms of the "three A's": Assimilation, Accommodation and Avoidance. Assimilative coping concerns the adolescent's cognitive or behavioural attempts to change the environment to his/her own benefit. This includes being confrontative, solving problems by direct action, rational thinking of the

[12] Olah (1995) defines coping as a person's active efforts to resolve stress. In this sense it is not restricted to successful outcomes, but includes all purposeful attempts to handle demands, regardless of their effectiveness (Ibid.: 493). Under this definition, suicide is also considered a coping strategy. I modify this definition slightly to more specifically include those strategies which do not potentially reverse a power relation but maintain it. This includes "giving in" or "accepting things the way they are", as opposed to challenging or trying to change things.

problem before reacting, and seeking social support for instrumental reasons. Adolescents who fall under this category are environment or task-oriented, constructive or problem-focussed. (Because my definition of coping differs slightly from Olah's, I redefined such strategies as resistance strategies. Behaviours specific to this category have already been discussed on pages 91 to 98.) Accommodative coping refers to the adolescent's cognitive or behavioural attempts to change himself/herself in order to adapt to the environment. Adolescents under this category are described as emotion-focussed or regulating, or self-oriented. Behaviour includes acceptance, expression or venting of feelings, keeping feelings to self, perseverance, positive thinking, seeking social support for emotional reasons and self - controlling or self - adapting. Avoidance coping refers to behaviours and enactments that entail "leaving the field", either physically (behavioural disengagement) or psychologically (cognitive disengagement). For example, actions may include social withdrawal, wishful thinking, self isolation and self destruction (suicide).

Many of the women's actions fell under the category of accommodative strategies, of trying to change oneself instead of the environment. Individuals can be understood as thinking along the lines of, "I accept the way things are and cannot change them" or "I accept the way things are and can change them but am not willing to." To illustrate, Rupy currently tries to keep her feelings to herself (self-controlling), trusting not even her closest friends. Sharon says that throughout her teens and college years she used positive thinking, believing that things would only get better(positive thinking). Sukhi also described using this strategy when she was experiencing problems in high-school. Kiren's coping strategy seems to be the same as when she was in high school.

She describes comparing her situation to that of other Indian girls, who she perceived as having it much worse (social comparison). She tries to think positively by focussing on the things that she is thankful for, e.g. how loving her parents are (gratitude). Raman as a teen, tried to think towards the future, by planning on how she would be able to leave her hometown (future/positive thinking). On the other hand, Neena while in high school engaged in frequent fighting matches with her parents, trying to stand her ground, (an assimilative or resistance strategy). After her first year in university, she adopted the strategy of trying to change herself (self-adaptation). This is a goal that she continues to work on - to be the type of daughter her parents expect her to be.

With regard to avoidance strategies, emotional and or physical withdrawal, an individual can be portrayed as thinking , "I cannot change things at all." As many as six of the eleven women admitted to contemplating or attempting to commit suicide at some point in their lives. Raj talks about how the parental restrictions she had and how wanting to "fit in" at school caused her to experience much tension in the following:

> In high-school, I hated my parents. I used to cry myself to sleep every night, like when I was 17. I was unhappy with my life. I've never told anybody but I tried to kill myself kind of because of my parents. I tried to use a razor on my wrists but it hurt too much. My mom used to be like do this, do this and I stopped eating and my doctor found out. I became like anorexic. I hated the life I was in. Why can't I be white? The life we were in. Why can't I have a white name? I was teased too much. I couldn't go out, I had to come home after school always. I wanted to do what my friends were able to do. My friends were allowed to go out until like they had a curfew, go to dances. Like why couldn't I have a boyfriend? Like I don't know. I wanted my skin to be white and my inner self to be white. I wanted people to see me as a white person.

Raj's comments illustrate the seriousness of racism, especially its effects on one's sense of self. For Raj, she says her negative experiences of racism resulted in her own lack of self-esteem and later rejection of and hatred towards the Indian culture.

Anita described herself as withdrawing from others, including friends, and avoiding people in general during her teens. She says she often locked herself in her bedroom in order to distance herself from her parents and her family (behavioural disengagement). She also used wishful thinking, wishing she was born into a different family, preferably a "white" one (escapist). At the age of sixteen, she attempted her first of two suicides. She describes her circumstances leading to her attempts at suicide:

> I felt a lot of tension while growing up. I used to get into these arguments with my dad. He'd be against the stupidest things like my wanting to go out and see a movie with friends from school. I just didn't understand what was so wrong. My older sister really had it the worse. She wouldn't listen to anything they ever said and would take off like all night and do whatever. She used to confide in me about all her problems ... I just dreaded coming home from school. The yelling in the house just seemed to get louder and louder until it was like everyday. That combined with my parents and stuff, well I just kind of flipped. I couldn't take it anymore so, I tried to slit my wrists.

Neena also revealed attempting to commit suicide on two occasions, shortly before her nineteenth birthday. Here she talks about the guilt and stress she experienced over secretly dating someone and feeling divided between her loyalties to her family and her self:

> Towards the end of first year [of university], I tried to commit suicide; like slit my wrists and then with a couple of bottles of Tylenol and muscle relaxants. My parents thought it was because they were pressuring me too much to get good grades and to become a doctor. It was that to some extent but it really was all this dating stuff that drove me to the edge. I really cared about that boy. I think I loved him. What made it worse was that he really cared about me too...I didn't know how I could be loyal to my family and to my own feelings too. My grades really suffered and I just couldn't deal with it all anymore.

Jasmine and Rupy, the youngest women in the study, admitted to thinking about suicide from time to time:

> I have thought about committing suicide, especially when I was younger because of my parents. But now I understand their point of view. If they piss me off, I don't really talk back. That's my way of dealing with it. *Jasmine*

> I handle my stress myself, basically. My sisters are like "Don't tell your friends anything, they'll just gossip. You can't trust anyone. You'll never know who they may talk to." And it's true. They might talk to other friends who might tell their parents and then it'll get to my parents. The same is true with counsellors and stuff. I get really down sometimes. Sometimes I think about you know just, well I just think about ending it. *Rupy*

Amar, although she has never attempted to commit suicide, says she almost went through with it at the age of eighteen but received "outside" help:

> I couldn't handle it. I was like having serious problems just because of all this tension and stuff and I didn't want to go home and my grandma died that year and it was just really really bad. [short pause] I wrote my [suicide] note I was just tired of always being kept on a leash. I mean just like if I was to go out I was to come home by 9:30 p.m. It was also first year of university. It's just the fun of being a university student and going out at 9:00 o clock. I just wasn't able to do that. It just seemed as I got older, my curfew got earlier. I just couldn't handle it. My doctor wanted me to leave the house. He's like you can't handle the stress - just look at you. From this stress you get headaches, you don't sleep, you don't eat. I just couldn't handle it anymore. I just wanted to die. My doctor sent me to a psychiatrist and my dad found my "note" because we had a fight. He was like why do you even go see a psychiatrist anyway, and blah blah. I was like because you guys stress me out. If you want proof, look I got this letter, read it, do whatever you want with it and I'm out of your life. I threw it at him and I left [the house].
> *And then what happened?*
> Well, nothing. I just drove around for a while to let myself cool down. It was like in the evening, so I had to come home. No one said anything to me. I just went up to my room.
> *Did your parents talk to you about it?*
> Kind of. The next day, in the evening my dad told me that he just wanted me to be happy and that I shouldn't worry about anything.

In the preceding examples, many of the women who experienced much stress and tension with their parents, chose to seek help outside of their families. For example, in the above account, Amar confided in her family physician and began seeing a psychiatrist. Raj eventually confided in her family physician as well. Anita approached her friends who approached her favourite teacher who in turn talked to Anita and together they approached a counsellor. Based upon the recommendation of the counsellor, Anita also began to see a psychiatrist. Raman also approached her friends who convinced her to talk to a counsellor. Sukhi personally approached a counsellor but unlike the other women, it was not until later in life, when she was past her teens, that she chose to do so. She says, "I thought it was time to put some closure on my life."

However, some women did not seek outside help. Rupy and Neena would have liked to but worried about their families finding out if they did and possible actions that would have been taken, such as being taken away from their families. As for the remaining women, Jas and Kiren felt that their problems were not so insurmountable, that they could not handle them themselves. These women relied on their (Indian) friends for support when needed. Raman also relied on the support of friends. Bal simply did not feel that she had any problems and thus was not in a position to seek any kind of help. Although she did say that her friends were always there for her when she needed them.

Thus, in general, many of the women seemed to rely on a combination of two types of coping strategies: accommodative and avoidance. For example, many women who attempted or contemplated suicide, an avoidance strategy, also admitted to seeking

emotional support for emotional reasons, an accommodative coping strategy. It seemed that most of the women tried to accept the rules as their parents had established for them. In the next section, I examine and describe their reasons as to why.

Contradictions

When I asked the women to elaborate more on the possible consequences of their "secret" actions, why they participated in certain behaviours and why they chose not to, many women explained that they did not want to disappoint their parents. By this I learned that they meant causing their parents emotional and/or physical harm. These women faced difficult decisions in balancing their desires with those of parental expectations. How willing were they to risk losing or alienating themselves from their parents? Kiren talks about the dilemma of wanting to date and her reasons for not doing so. She feels that she is not allowed to be herself:

> I guess it's a dilemma with me. Um on the one hand I wish I could just, you know, be who I want to be, be free, whatever that type of thing. Again, it would really hurt my parents if they ever found out. So for me, I've never dated because it would be sneaking behind their backs. They would freak out. I could actually see my Dad having a heart attack. He would be so hurt. I wish it wasn't like that but it is. So, I respect it. But um, you know I've been tempted a couple of times but I haven't. ... Reputation, *izzat* is a concern but it's most importantly about hurting my parents. People talking about me and saying I'm a slut and stuff. I don't really care about what other people say as much as I do about what my parents think of me, and what other people think or say to them.

Raman, although engages in dating, offers similar reasons:

> If people are going to say shit about me, then go right ahead. I don't care. I care about my parents. I don't want people saying your daughter's like this and and this. Only hurts them I don't do anything else for them. To me it doesn't matter. To me, I don't care but then, who knows what could happen to them. My mom is so fragile. She'll probably just, like [pause], once she had a black-out and just stuff like that, I don't want to be the cause of their illness. Cause that would be hanging over my head for the rest of my life. I don't want to hurt them intentionally. I mean I've put them through a lot of stress as it is, the things I did, getting caught skipping, having

> rumours spread about me. Why? And my Dad's ill as it is. I wouldn't want to cause him to have a heart attack or something cause it's going to be on my hands later, or even hurt my mom.

In the above she makes references to her father's health. This may in part explain why economic security did not give Raman the individual autonomy that it did for Raj (as discussed in the section on resistance in relation to the Family / Sikh community). Raj is willing to risk losing her family if her needs are not respected but Raman is not.

Most of the women did not seem to be so concerned about the health of their parents as they were actually scared of going against the rules. They sincerely believed that their parents would force them into an arranged marriage if they were ever caught with a boy. This short excerpt from Jasmine illustrates this general sentiment:

> If I go out with someone, the risks for me getting caught with the guy, not being able to go out of the house at all and getting married off, either here or being shipped off to India and getting [forcibly] married to someone from there.

Some women reported feeling intimidated by their parents, especially their fathers:

> My mom doesn't spaz as loud as my dad. I can still raise my voice louder than hers and talk louder but with my dad the house starts to like shatter so I don't want to like overpower everything. I told my mom, when it comes to my mom spazzing I can handle her. I can spaz just as much and I can walk out and not really care. but when it comes to my dad, he spazzes I just start shaking like "ahhhhh, okay, we have a problem." *Amar*

> I'm scared of my dad. Even just him talking to me, raising his voice. I'll be just like "Ah...". I'll just start crying right there on the spot. I don't know why it's like that. It's just the way it is. I don't want to start crying, so I don't want to talk to him either. *Raman*

Some women such as Raj, Anita and Neena actually believed that their fathers would go so far as to physically harm them in order to protect the family name. Here are Raj's comments:

> My dad told me if I ever dated a white guy, he would seriously kill me, cut me up and throw my body in a river or something. He told me when I was 16 and brought it up again when I was 18. My mom goes to me, "Has any guy asked you out? Well, you're a pretty girl." And I'm like it's kind of hard these days with our religion, culture and she goes "Why?" Like trying to find out what I think and I'm like you know why, you guys threaten me and I think any guy would be scared of you guys.

In talking about the possible consequences of dating, Anita here narrates her own confusion at whether refusing to date is really her own choice or a choice made for her by her parents and one that she has simply learned to accept for herself:

> Well, if a guy asks me out I kind of break off my relationship as a friend with that guy and um, I'm just like no. And I sometimes tell my parents and we laugh about it. But like I told you I don't know if it's my choice. If I'm doing this to that extreme I guess it's not my choice. Like I'm not sure how my parents would take it if I did date. Like I could actually talk to them about it but if I did, they would probably totally flip. In the past I believe my dad would have strangled me or something but now I'm not too sure how they would react because I do remember how passionate they were about that issue. Now it's like they openly joke about guys asking me out, it seems more acceptable that people do date like in the East Indian community but they wouldn't approve of it for me, our family, especially if it was somebody from a different caste or something. I think they accept it more of other people; they don't disapprove of it as much. So they're slowly changing but not enough not yet. For now I don't feel like testing the waters. I think back then, I was too scared to but now, I'm not sure why I don't feel like dating. Because it's bad, like the culture says or if it's really my own choice? It's kind of hard to separate.

Here Neena offers an interesting narrative of how she came to know the extent of her father's commitment to protect the family name. She also talks about how this later impacted her when she started dating someone secretly. She talks about the contradiction of trying to be loyal to herself and her family at the same time:

> I remember once when I was like sixteen or seventeen and this East Indian man came to our house. The guy introduced himself to my dad and said that he needed to talk to my dad. He was a complete stranger and we were all wondering who he was. After the guy had left, my dad told us that he was looking for his daughter. He had allowed her to go to school away from home (he was from some town in northern BC) and found out that she wasn't planning to come home after her exams and was going to run away and marry some white guy. The father was asking my dad for his help and any information in locating his daughter so he could take her back home.

> Anyway my sister and I were really shocked that my dad agreed to help this total stranger and it was then he turned and said something like, in Punjabi, "If you girls ever try to runaway with a boy, I'll find you and kill you with my own bare hands. You'll only marry someone that I find for you or else you know what will happen." It really scared the hell out of us. I was shocked that my dad agreed to help this guy who for all I knew he may have planned to do something awful to his own daughter but I was even more shocked to hear that my dad would be willing to kill us something stupid like over family name. And he mentioned it a couple of times afterwards too. I asked my mom about it and she said she would be the one to give my dad the okay and if I ever "blackened her face", she wouldn't even come to my funeral to look at me. It really scared the hell out of me I think because I believed that my parents would actually resort to something like that. So, when I met this guy, I was all mixed up inside. I wanted to be loyal to my family but to my own feelings too, I think we held hands once or twice but that was about it. I just couldn't go through with it - the fear. At the time I didn't want to hurt my family and I was just too scared of what they would do to me if they ever found out. I don't even think a forced marriage would have been a viable option for them.

It should be pointed out that these women, Raj, Anita and Neena no longer believed that their fathers would harm them. I speculate that this may have something to do with actual changes in the Sikh community. Marriages such as those out of caste or with nonIndians such as "whites" are occurring more frequently and are losing their shock value. Within this context, parental attitudes may have also changed to some extent. I also suspect that because these women have proven their obedience to their parents in the "crucial" teen years, parents may also have a naive sense of security that their daughters have internalized the "appropriate" norms, e.g. dating is inherently bad.

The women also talked about their fears of having an arranged marriage, of marrying a complete stranger and having to be subservient to both him and the in-laws. This was another contradiction that the women voiced. As daughters living in their father's household, they worry either about physically harming their fathers (Kiren, Jasmine, Raman, Rupy) or being physically harmed by their fathers (Anita, Sukhi) and

with regard to marriage, they worry about their future husbands. Many of the women talked about how their mothers explained to them that they can do whatever they want only **after** they are married. The women were skeptical of this and felt that they would achieve little freedom/independence once they were married since they would have to take into account their husband's and in-laws' wishes. In general, they felt that marriage would be constraining and voiced concerns about not being able to live their own lives, ever. Here, Anita who does not object to an arranged marriage per se, talks about her fears:

> Like I said my parents', especially my mom's, idea of what a girl is born to do is get married and then have kids. My mom gives me the impression that every girl has to have an arranged marriage and they're not worth anything because depending on what their husband's worth, you know as far as education, looks whatever, that's where the woman gets her worth from and that really bugs me. She keeps telling me that once you get married, your life is going to change because you have to do what your husband says you have to do according to what your in-laws want. And that also bugs me; it's like when am I gonna have my life? And why isn't my life worth anything? It's only worth according to what my husband is worth? My dad puts it this way, "I think it's a good idea that you get married now." They kind of give me mixed messages. It's like on one side you should have independence, an education, you should make something of your life, you should get a job that you want. On the other side they're telling me that you should have an arranged marriage, give up your life and live for your husband and his family, put your job or career on the side and make sure you have children. Not only is it expected that you get married but that you have to have children. I want the career, I want the independence. I'm living in my parents' home like I said I don't really have a life here. There is no really **my** life. It scares me that after I get married I won't have a life either because I'll be taking responsibility for my husband and his family.

Neena, like most of the other women in the study does not want to have an arranged marriage but feels that she has little choice but to agree to one. She does not want to risk alienating herself from them. She talks about the unfairness of sacrificing her needs and happiness for others:

> My parents expect an arranged marriage for me, probably in the next two years when I graduate with my degree. When I'm married, then I have to do as my in-laws expect and as my husband wishes. I have to be careful not to step on any toes so as to not disgrace my family. I have to learn to love my husband and tough it out. A few years later after being married, I'm supposed to have kids. It doesn't matter if I'm not happy in my married life, I'm supposed to make the best of it. My parents say that's when I can go wild and do whatever I want, of course if my husband's okay with it only. That's the type of arranged marriage I'm expected to have. I learn to love and get along with a total stranger and his family. I think it's really unfair. When do I get to do what I want to do? Why do I always have to be accountable to someone? I think it's stupid. It doesn't sound like there's any way for East Indian girls to achieve their own freedom. They're always living their lives for someone else. Like when do I get to live my own life?

Neena's sentiments about wanting to get a job, and devote time to a career were echoed by almost all the women in the study. The women wanted an education and a career in order to achieve independence as adults. This they felt was in contrast to what their parents expected them to get an education for; to secure "good" marriage matches (meaning highly educated, money-making husbands for their daughters).

When asked why they do the things that they feel will cause their parents great distress, the women cited three main reasons: they had a right to do such things, there really was nothing inherently "bad" about the activities, and they wanted to do the same things their friends were doing. In the following example, Kiren provides her reasons. It is obvious from her talk that she views activities such as dating and clubbing in a different way than her parents do:

> Because well ah, I think I deserve to have fun. I know where to draw the line. I'm a responsible person, I know when to say no and when to say yes. I think I deserve to have that freedom but I know if I were to ask my parents, they would say no right away cause they think that stuff is bad...I see other people doing it, not necessarily just people of my own culture, but I see them doing it and I think whey can't I do that too. Like my non- Indian friends. Most of my Indian friends aren't allowed to do that stuff either... I feet guilty too about doing it [clubbing]behind my parents' back sort of thing but I continue doing it because it isn't really bad.

Jasmine talks about her friends:

> I think there's nothing wrong with it. I just go out for a good time like if my friends are going then why shouldn't I? ...It bothers me. I get a sick feeling in my stomach that they do so much for me. But I don't really do anything bad and I know there are people who do worse things than I do.

Raman, in her answer cites all three reasons. She also blames her parents. She reasons that if they were less strict, then perhaps she would not have had to do the things and to the extent that she did:

> Actually I knew in the back of my mind that this was what was going to happen, bad rep and everything but I didn't really care. Because my parents didn't let us do very much, if they had given us the freedom then maybe I wouldn't have turned out the way I did, I mean sneaking out at night, going to parties, skipping school, sleeping around. Maybe if they let me go the movies once a awhile or whatever, I wouldn't have done all this stuff cause I would have been straight forward and honest, I'm gonna do all this stuff. Still to this day, my parents won't let us go wherever we want. I think a lot has to do with being influenced by other "western" people [non-East Indian] because that's what I grew up with, right. And you see people saying to you, "How come you're not allowed to do this?" And then you feel really bad so then you're like I'm gonna do it now cause why does everybody else get to do it but not me? It was also fun doing those things, I remember in high-school: Why can't you go to the prom? Why can't you go to the movies with us? Your parents are so weird. It's your life, do what you want and then you get influenced like that. How come everybody else gets to do these things but not me? ... I know they did their best to raise me but they still don't understand, I want to do the things I want to do because I'm old enough. I know what's right and wrong.

Neena, in describing her reasons, makes reference to living "another life" from time to time, depending upon the situation she finds herself in. This is something that she as well as other women, mentioned earlier:

> I have to conceal things from them because they won't let me do those things and I want to do those things, most of my friends are doing those things. And I don't really understand what the big deal is. What's really so bad about wanting to dance with your girlfriends in a public place and have fun? What's so wrong with it? When I ask to do things, it's always no and we end up fighting about it and not speaking for weeks at a time. There's like too much tension in the house then and then my parents put more pressure on my by making **me** feel guilty for having these feelings and they begin to worry more and start lecturing me on how my friends are

> just using me and it's my family who really loves me. I can't handle all that. It's just easier to **not** tell them. They don't worry as much, we don't fight as much and everyone's just happier. The only stress is on me to be careful about it, to not get caught. Sometimes I feel like I'm leading this other life. But what else can I do? How can I make them happy and myself at the same time?

Although in my interview schedule, I did not present a question on feelings of leading a "different" life, I did probe for further meanings when it was mentioned by the women. I feel it deserves mention as it can be argued that most of the women more or less engaged in secret lives or at the very least, secret activities which their parents were not aware of. I asked Neena to comment further and she told me that although she felt she was leading a different life at times, she was always the same person. She just acted differently depending on the situation that she faced.

> I've felt like something I was leading a different life, with all that sneaking behind my parents' backs and not telling them about things. They don't know any of it and I'm not proud of it either. I wouldn't ever tell them about it. The cultures are different but I'm still the same person no matter what the situation. Its just I choose to act differently depending which situation I find myself in. Like at a reception party, I don't go talking to guys. I don't even dance near them. But if I'm at a non-Indian party then I feel safe enough and don't worry about being seen talking to guys. My values and beliefs are the same it's just I may behave differently and that's dictated by the culture.

Sukhi also described herself as leading a different life. She used the phrase "secret" life and discussed its importance for keeping both herself happy and her parents:

> I sometimes kind of think I have this double life. I go out and they don't know about it. My younger siblings have an idea that I go to clubs and stuff but we don't talk about it. With my aunts and uncles, they don't actually know about that but they do trust me with their kids and stuff. They see me as educated. They're like okay, she's on the right path. She moved back home. So they respect me. Because in a way within our culture, if women are seen that way and even some guys, that wrecks their image. We don't see anything wrong with it but older people will. I respect that because that's the way they have been raised. They don't know different and it's very hard for them to change. Okay, we can go out, have a good time and meet other people who respect us- in that way we're breaking ground. But, then we can't tell them (family), about our secret lives. I kind of think I have a secret life. It is

> important for me to keep it secret in order to have the peace and keep their respect and just keep a balance between one life and the other.

Taking the above comments into account and those that were presented throughout this discussion, it is apparent that these young women are confronted with a variety of conflict-related problems in their lives. With their parents and Sikh community, as Sikh daughters, they work on presenting a "good girl" image. But outside the home, many women engage in activities without their parents' knowledge. For some women this division between home or parents, and peers or the larger community takes on a larger significance, and they feel as though they are leading "secret" or "double" lives.

In the next chapter, the implications of these findings in relation to the theoretical literature will be further discussed.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

This study has explored the lived experiences of second-generation Punjabi Sikh women living in the Canadian context and their interpretations of these experiences. In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the analysis with respect to the existing and alternative theoretical frameworks as outlined in the latter part of Chapter Three. Finally, I offer some reflections on the nature of this research project and some concluding remarks with respect to the significance of the study and directions for future research.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings have provided evidence that the young Sikh women who participated in this study experienced various degrees of overt and interpersonal conflict in their lives. The conflict they experienced occurred primarily in relation to parents / parental rules and the broader Canadian society, i.e. racism. These experiences of conflict can be understood by adopting the concepts of power and resistance, culture as "tool-kits" and situated identities within a symbolic interactionist framework.

With regard to parents, many women talked about the lack of communication with their fathers and feeling "closer" to their mothers overall. The women described being able to discuss personal matters with their mothers but not their fathers. This gender-specific form of talk can be understood in terms of the power relation that exists between women and their fathers. The fathers are the enforcers of the rules and authority figures of the household. As the women described, the fathers were the ones who intimidated, verbally threatened and sometimes emotionally and physically abused their wives and daughters. The women frequently spoke of not wanting to make their fathers

angry or upset. Rarely did they mention their mothers being upset. Through interaction with their fathers, the women were made aware of the powerful influence that their fathers asserted and the subordinate position that they occupied in the household. Fathers (and mothers) also asserted power over the daughters by attempting to control their behaviour outside the home. *Izzat* (family honour) and the notion of the "good girl", (passive, obedient and virginal) were frequently invoked to command compliance. Yet an equivalent stereotype is not used to control young men's behaviours. Men are the privileged sex in Sikh culture. Not only do the rules not apply to them but they are the enforcers of those rules. Aside from the family, other adult members of the Sikh community were also able to assert power over the women through gossip.

But where there is power, there is also resistance (Janeway 1981). The women did conform to this "good girl" image but I argue that many women were able to resist. The women presented the "good girl" image to their parents or in particular situations such as when at home or as one Neena described, "Like at a reception party, I don't go talking to guys. I don't even dance near them. But if I'm at a non-Indian party then I feel safe enough and don't worry about being seen talking to guys." Many of the women reproduced the unequal power relations in this sense but they also resisted or challenged this stereotype through secrecy and lies and some, through confrontation, e.g. threat of leaving home. For at least six of the eleven women in the study, these strategies were so successful that they were able to maintain dating behaviours and intimate relationships without their parents' knowledge. In this manner, some of the women were able to resist

the "power from above" as asserted by their parents and in doing so, were able to reject their own subordination.

The power relation is also evident when world-views or cultural resources which people use to solve different kinds of problems, are examined (Swidler 1986). Throughout the interviews it was apparent that the women adopted a different frame of reference or world-view than their parents. For example, parents assigned negative meanings to activities such as dating and clubbing whereas the women assigned them positive meanings. The women talked about careers whereas parents talked about marriage and raising children. These world-views were conflicting and contradictory and were used to justify actions by parents to maintain control over their daughters and by daughters to resist this control. The women often justified their actions of secrecy and lies by explaining that they felt they had a right to do so, especially if other (nonIndian) people (and Indian boys) were allowed to do these things and besides, they wanted to have fun. The women talked about rights whereas their parents justified their actions by making references to obligation and loyalty. Parents also tried to maintain control over their daughters by threatening them or drawing upon a particular interpretation of love. Parents worked from the frame of reference that love is articulated through involvement with the family, not with an individual. To love is to engage oneself in self-sacrifice. The principle being that if their daughters really loved them then the daughters would not do anything so dishonourable so as to risk possible emotional and/or physical trauma to the parents. This constrained some of the women's behaviour but not that of others. Another way in which parents tried to justify the restrictions placed on their daughters' activities

outside the home was by arguing that it was because of other people (gossip, community pressure) that they had to place the restrictions that they did. They were only trying to protect their daughters from others. In this manner, the parents drew on their knowledge of traditional beliefs to assert power over, and command compliance from, their daughters. Thus, the operating vocabulary for parents was one of honor and tradition and social control by the group. In contrast, the operating vocabulary for young women was that of independence and rights. Their frame of reference was that of the broader "Canadian" society. This distinction is also apparent when one considers that the women described themselves as "modern" or "Canadian" or "more open-minded" in direct contrast to their parents, especially their fathers who they described as lacking "understanding", as "traditional" and "less open-minded". Culture can also be more generally be thought of as including a set of specific kinds of knowledge. In engaging in secrecy, many women relied on their better knowledge (or their parents' less familiarity) of the "Canadian" culture to organize their actions. Thus, I argue that the daughters adopted a different world-view than their parents, one which most likely corresponds to that of their peers and the broader society, to aid in their construction of "strategies of actions".

Power in the form of racism was also asserted by the dominant "white" majority against these women. In a predominately "white" society, these women's racialized identities were easily "announced" on the basis of their skin colour, whether they wished it or not. Women described incidents whereby they were assigned negative meanings by "whites". It seems that in general, the women reacted to these negative appraisals in one

of two ways: rejecting the ethnic culture for the "white" culture or embracing the ethnic culture and rejecting the "white" culture instead. I view these two reactions as resistance strategies because they are adopted with the potential of reversing the power relation. The women who embrace the ethnic culture, find safety in numbers and in solidarity they challenge the racism they face. By doing so, they place themselves in opposition to "whites". Other women who try to identify more with "whites", try to reverse the power relation in the sense that they unite with the dominant group. They place themselves in opposition to the ethnic culture. This had important implications for one's sense of self to the extent that some of the women reported having low self-esteem. It should be pointed out that some of the women described feeling comfortable with being both Indian and "Canadian" and did not construct themselves in opposition to one culture or the other.

As discussed, identity for these women was not only a subjective process but also an objective one where others such as racists or gossiping community members were able to label and come to view the women in particularly positive or negative ways. But for these women, identities are most importantly multiple and situated in nature and the women also play an active role in presenting them. For example, with respect to the "good girl" image, the women as daughters took on a genderised ethnic or cultural identity which was salient for them during particular situations such as in the home / with parents. This was an identity that the women were pressured to maintain and one which they themselves "announced"(in order to satisfy their parents) and the parents "placed" them in. I argue that the women also had "secret" identities, which were constructed in response to the "good girl". This was an identity evoked in situations with friends or

boyfriends, one that was referred to as "Canadian" by some of the women and where they went to great lengths to maintain without their parents' knowledge.

Not all the women were able to engage successfully in resistance. Borrowing from Olah's categorization system, I found that the women basically used a combination of two types of coping strategies: changing themselves in order to adapt to the environment (accommodation) and generally avoiding problems or "leaving the field". These women tried accepting life as determined by their parents. They frequently put their feelings aside or changed their behaviours and made personal sacrifices for their parents. Some of these women felt so distressed that they contemplated and/or attempted suicide and often sought emotional help from friends and school counsellors.

Thus the insights of symbolic interactionism and the perspective of power-resistance have proved to be useful tools for analyzing this data. In this thesis, I have argued that this alternative framework is an improvement over the traditional framework of assimilation-socialization / culture-conflict. The assimilation framework would have concluded that the young women are assimilating at a faster rate than their parents and exposure to a different social milieu has widened the generation gap between the parents and their adolescent daughters. Another possible conclusion would be that the young women wanted to assimilate but are unable to do so because of their parents. Racism would most likely have been given little consideration within this framework and if examined, blame would have been assigned to the ethnic culture or the women themselves; it is their fault that they are not assimilating, it is their (inferior) culture which is constraining them, etc. The assimilation framework with its conceptualization

of culture as a static entity and a thing that one has, would have most likely concluded that the two cultures are oppositional and incompatible. The young women would have been portrayed as victims of their ethnic and oppressive culture. In contrast, adopting the alternative framework has led to a very different set of conclusions and analysis. Culture is not viewed as something one has but rather something which is created and negotiated via meanings and accomplished through everyday practices. Using such a conceptualization, I was able to demonstrate the ways in which the women adopted various resistance and coping strategies to counter the power their parents exercised over them. I was also able to draw attention to the power exercised by "others" such as the Sikh community in general and of "whites", i.e. racism. Using this alternative framework, I rejected the portrayal of the women as passive victims and provided some insight into the ways in which gender and power are produced in social relations and interaction, and the complexity of decision making and negotiation involved on the part of the young women.

Reflections

In this research, although I did not treat the women's accounts as representative of second-generation Punjabi Sikh women, I did treat their words as representative of themselves. I presented the women's accounts and my own understandings of what they said and / or implied. Since writing up this research, I have come across a critique of the description / exposition methodology as I have used it. This critique is presented by Gerhard Nijhof (1997) who argues that two approaches to the analysis of textual data, exposition of the meaning of texts and interpretation by the researcher, are unacceptable

in the field of empirical sociology. Nijhof argues that a better method is to first regard an answer as a reading of the interviewer's question and second, to view it as an internal reading of the respondent's earlier formulations. I acknowledge these criticisms and in my own research did come across a problem with one of my interview questions. When I asked the women about their experiences with regard to racism, the women spoke of the racism they experienced in the broader context, but also spoke of the "racism" that members of the Sikh community practiced against their own members (on the basis of caste) and towards those outside their community (negative attitudes and stereotypes of other East Indians and "whites"). But aside from this, the women interpreted the questions the way I expected them to and I rarely was asked for clarification. I believe that I was able to achieve a fairly valid interpretation of the lives of these women in that I come from a similar background as these women. I too am a second generation Punjabi Sikh woman. And although I did not feel "safe" enough to describe my own experiences in this research, I did find that the women's experiences corroborated my own.

Criticisms of the Research

Given my own inexperience as social researcher, there are several ways in which this study may have been improved. First, I believe a narrative form of analysis would have been useful. In presenting the data, I sometimes found it awkward to break up paragraphs. I found that without the context of what was said, the meanings of the words were not always straightforward or obvious. I believe that this study could have also benefitted from an analysis of experiences over time. I attempted to do this with the inclusion of diaries but as explained this did not work out due to the timing of my study

(near the end of the semester for women in school) and the time constraints within which I was working. In addition, I believe this study could have benefitted from the inclusion of a group of similar aged Punjabi males for comparison purposes. Finally, I regret not having been able to have led a focus group discussion at the end of the research. It would have been interesting to include a more collaborative point of view of the issues and experiences. I believe the women in the study would have benefitted from meeting one another.

Future Research

I propose that future research should continue focussing attention on parent-adolescent relations but with a critical reflectiveness as I have attempted to do in this research. Researchers need to ask why it is that we continue to search for conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship and what are the social and political implications of the way racialized youth and youth in general are constructed? I also believe that more research grounded in the experiences of youth is needed. Some specific questions which may be further explored include the following: How do experiences of conflict differ for young men and women? How do conflicts differ between young men and women with respect to each parent? What does a discussion of the analytical categories of race, gender and class reveal? What are some possible types of interventionist strategies? These questions should be used to further research not only on Punjabi youth but on youth of other minority and racialized backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Hi! I am a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Victoria and am working on my Master of Arts thesis/research project. I am looking for young Punjabi Sikh women, 18 to 25 years in age to volunteer as participants in my study during the upcoming month. The purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences of living in two cultures: the traditional East Indian culture and the larger "Canadian" culture. As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a series of in-depth interviews (only 2), and will be asked questions about your relationship with parents/friends and opinions on topics such as dating, marriage, religion, racism and being a woman in today's society. It is hoped that by including this kind of information in the academic literature, future community / referral services will be better able to serve the needs of young Punjabi women. All information will be kept in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of this research. Anonymity is guaranteed. Upon completion of the thesis a summary of the findings will be provided.
Would you be interested in participating? If so, please contact **Perbeen Mann** at **xxx-xxx** (home #) or xxx-xxx(office #)

Date: Mar 3rd, 1997

APPENDIX B: RECORD OF CONTACTS FOR RECRUITING PROCESS

CODE #	DATE	SOURCE	2ND CONTACT Y/N	RESPONSE A/R/O	DETAILS (NAME,TEL.#,ETC.)

Y=YES N=NO
A=ACCEPTED R=REFUSE O=OTHER
SOURCE=FIRST CONTACT, FROM RESEARCHER'S INFORMAL NETWORKS

APPENDIX C

Brief Description

This is a brief description of the research to be used informally by individuals in my informal networks for the purpose of recruitment:

Perbeen Mann is a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Victoria. She is currently working on her Master of Arts thesis and is looking for young women to volunteer as participants in her study. The purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences of living in two cultures: the traditional East Indian culture and the larger "Canadian" culture. The women in the study will be asked to narrate their experiences with regard to conflict and will be asked questions about their relationship with their parents/friends and their views on topics such as dating, marriage, religion, career/education and being a woman in today's society. It is hoped that by including this kind of information in the academic literature, future community / referral services will be better able to serve the needs of such women. All information will be kept in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of this research. Upon completion of the thesis, if requested, those who participate will be sent a summary of the findings. Would you be interested in participating? You may contact Perbeen at her home telephone number, (xxx) xxx-xxxx. This in no way obligates you to participate.

Do I have your permission to give her your home phone number so that she may be able to contact you directly and provide you with more information on the research?

APPENDIX D

Part 1: Telephone Contact Form

My name is Perbeen Mann and I am a Master of Arts student in Sociology at the University of Victoria. I received your name from [blank] who said you gave your permission to be contacted by me. *(Check to see if permission was indeed given.)*

I am conducting a study which is concerned with the problems that young women face from living in two worlds - the traditional East Indian culture and the "Canadian" culture. As part of this research, I will be interviewing 8 to 10 women. I am particularly interested in talking to women whose background is Punjabi Sikh. *(Ask if individual wants to learn more about the study. If response is "yes", proceed. Otherwise thank the individual for showing interest.)*

In this study, women will be asked to narrate their experiences with regard to conflict and will be asked questions about their relationship with their parents/friends and their views on topics such as dating, marriage, religion, career/education and being a woman in today's society. It is hoped that by including this kind of information in the academic literature, future community / referral services will be better able to serve the needs of such women. Participation will involve at least two audio-taped interviews of one hour to two hours duration and regular writing in a diary over the span of four weeks. Interviews will be arranged to suit you; locations and times are flexible.

All information will be kept in strict confidence. Your name will not appear in any published results or Ms. Mann's thesis and nor will your name be recorded on tapes,

transcripts or any other materials. Upon completion of the thesis, if requested, you will be sent a summary of the findings. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Would you like to participate? Do you have any questions or concerns? *(If the individual wishes to participate, determine if she is eligible by proceeding with screening questions. Otherwise, thank individual for her time and interest.)*

Part 2: Telephone Screening Form

RESEARCHER: **Perbeen Mann-Kahalma**

INTERVIEW PRE-SCREENING CODE: _____

TEL NO: _____

DATE CONTACTED: _____

TIME: _____

SOURCE OF CONTACT: _____

OUTCOME/ELIGIBILITY: _____

INTERVIEW CODE NO: _____

Identifying information will be removed from this material immediately after contact and the material recoded by code name and number only. The key to the code and 'master list' will be filed securely and separately from interview transcripts. The material sought in the telephone pre-interview contact is to determine eligibility and interest, and to assist sampling.

Personal Information Questions For Screening Potential Participants

I would like to ask you a few more questions before we can set up an interview. The design of this study requires that the women in the research sample be alike in several ways. For example, the women must all be of Punjabi Sikh background. To make sure you meet the sampling requirement, I would like to take a few minutes to ask you some general background questions. I will be checking off your answers on a form I have prepared.

1. Where were you born?

   a Canada.....Go to qu. 3

   b India.....Go to qu. 2

   c Other.....Go to qu. 2

2. How old were you when you immigrated to Canada?

   a 5 years or less..... Go to qu. 3

   b other..... Statement A

3. What is your present age?

a	16	f	21	k	other.....Statement A
b	17	g	22		
c	18	h	23	For responses a to j,..... go to qu. 4	
d	19	I	24		
e	20	j	25		

4. What is your marital status?

   a single.....Go to qu. 5

   b other..... Statement A

5. Do you normally live at home with both parents?

   a yes.....Go to qu. 6

   b no.....Statement A

6. Are you a full-time student?

   a yes.....Go to qu. 7

   b no.....Statement A

7. What type of school do you attend?

   a high-school.....Go to qu. 8

   b college/university.....Go to qu. 8

   c other.....Statement A

8. While attending school, do you live outside/away from your parents' home?

   a yes.....Go to qu. 9

   b no.....Go to qu. 9

9. What is your ethnic background?

   a Punjabi.....Go to qu. 10

   b other.....Statement A

10. What is your religious background?

   a Sikhism.....Go to qu. 11

   b other.....Statement A

11. In what country were your parents born?

   a India.....Go to qu. 12

   b other.....Statement A

12. In what country were your parents raised?

   a India.....Go to qu. 13

   b other.....Statement A

13. Did your mom and dad immigrate to Canada approximately the same time?

   a yes.....Go to qu. 15

   b no.....Go to qu. 14

14.a) For approximately how many years has your dad lived in Canada?

a 10 - 15.....Go to qu. 14.b)

b 15 - 20 .....Go to qu. 14.b)

c 20 - 25 .....Go to qu. 14.b)

d other.....Statement A

b) For approximately how many years has your mom lived in Canada?

a 10 - 15.....Statement B

b 15 - 20 .....Statement B

c 20 - 25..... Statement B

d other.....Statement A

15. For approximately how many years have your parents lived in Canada?

a 10 - 15.....Statement B

b 15 - 20 .....Statement B

c 20 - 25 .....Statement B

d other.....Statement A

Use one of the following two statements to conclude pre-screening phone converstion:

Statement A: *Thank individual for her time and interest and explain that she is not eligible for the study.*

Statement B: *Arrange a mutually convenient time and location to meet for the initial interview. Ask if she has any further questions, give out your home phone number. Thank individual for her time and let her know that you'll be calling ahead (one day prior to the arranged time) to check if appointment still stands. What would be a suitable time, telephone number to call at?*

Interview scheduled for:

Date. _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

CALL BACKDATE:

DATE: _____

TIME. _____

TELEPHONE NO: _____ **Confirmed?** yes/ no (Circle one)

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT'S STATEMENT:

I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this research project which will explore the experiences of young Punjabi Sikh women living in Canadian society. The purpose of the study is to learn more about the experiences of living in two cultures: the traditional East Indian culture and the larger "Canadian" culture. Ms. Perbeen Mann, a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Victoria is the sole researcher for this study. This information is being gathered so that the academic literature on East Indian immigrant families will better reflect young women's voices and experiences.

I have decided to be interviewed in a small series of meetings with Ms. Mann at mutually convenient locations and times. These meetings will consist of two interviews, each approximately two hours long. During these interviews, I will be asked to narrate my experiences with regard to conflict and will be asked questions regarding my relationship with my parents and friends, and my views on topics such as dating, marriage, religion, career / education, and being a woman in today's society. I understand that these interviews may be audio-taped and the tapes will be erased immediately after my interview has been transcribed. I understand that I can ask not to have any part (or all) of the interview audiotaped. I also understand that I will be given a list of discussion topics and will be asked to write about my experiences with regard to these topics as they occur in a diary for a period of approximately four weeks. At the end of this period, this diary will be collected by Ms. Mann for analysis. I understand that

this diary will be returned to me if I should request so and I will then be held responsible for disposing of it.

I understand that all information will remain confidential. My name will not appear in any published results or Ms. Mann's thesis and my name will not be recorded on the tapes or transcripts. The tapes will be kept solely in the possession of Ms. Mann and she will be the only person to listen to them. I also understand that upon completion of the research, all data, including audio-tapes will be destroyed. I have also been assured by Ms. Mann that upon completion of the thesis, I will be sent a summary of the findings.

I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not wish to respond to. I also understand that I have the freedom to withdraw my participation from this research at any time after signing this form with no questions asked and no prejudice. I understand that I can contact Perbeen Mann at her home telephone number, (xxx) xxx-xxxx if I have any questions or concerns at any time during the research process. I also understand that I may contact Dr. Rennie Warburton, who is Ms. Mann's supervisor at the University of Victoria, at (xxx) xxx-xxx.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

APPENDIX F

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT:

I, Perbeen Mann, am the sole researcher conducting a study for my Master's thesis to learn more about the experiences of East Indian women living in Canadian society. In accordance with ethical regulations for research involving humans, I will make every effort to protect the safety, welfare and rights of my research participants. To do so, all information that I obtain will be held strictly confidential. Any data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Only I will have access to this data. Names and identities of participants will not appear in my report on the research. The information received from research participants may be used for publication in a scholarly journal. All data, including audio-tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. A summary of the findings of this research will be made available to the research participants when the thesis is completed.

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX G

Diary Discussion Topics:

parents / family

friends

religion

culture

dating

marriage

being a woman

racism

The informed consent form will be explained and given to the participant to sign at the beginning of this interview. The consent form describes the objectives of the study, identifies the name and home phone number of the researcher, explains the rights of refusal and withdrawal and explains confidentiality. The researcher will explain to the participant that consent to doing this interview does not interfere with her right to withdraw at a later stage. The participants will be reminded to consider the protection of privacy of other individuals they may mention during this interview.

Interview Schedule: (Note: Includes combined questions for interviews #1 and #2)

Introduction

I would like to begin this interview by talking a little bit about myself. Like yourself, I am a second generation woman of Punjabi Sikh background. My Dad migrated to Canada from Punjab (India) as a young boy and my Mom arrived here during her late teens. I am the eldest of three children and have a younger sister and brother. This research project is closely tied to my own experiences; the experiences I had while growing up in Vancouver (BC). For me, these experiences include feeling confused about who I was/who I was supposed to be, trying to take the best from both cultures (the East Indian culture and the larger "Canadian" culture), conforming to my parents' wishes while still maintaining my own desires and individuality, testing the limits of my parents' tolerance levels, etc. Anyway, at some point in time, I realized that I was not alone - other young Punjabi Sikh women were having similar experiences. This phenomenon of common experiences, of growing up in a minority culture/tradition quirked my curiosity.

So, when I entered the MA program in Sociology at UVic, and with some encouragement from my thesis supervisor, I decided to make this topic into a do-able research project; a project devoted to examining and describing the experiences that young Punjabi Sikh women have/have had while growing up in Canada. And that's about it. Do you have any questions for me at this point?

Okay, now you'll have the opportunity to talk a little bit about yourself. I'm going to start off by asking you some questions about your relationship with your parents.

---

1) How would you describe your relationship with your parents?
[Excellent, good, bad, okay? Do you have a very "open" relationship with your parents where you could go to them and discuss anything and everything? Can you illustrate with some examples? What sorts of issues do you feel that you cannot discuss with them? Do you feel closer to one parent than the other? Why do you think this is so? Are you happy with the relationship you have with your parents? Do you wish things were different, if so, how?]

2) Can you describe some situations where you had to conceal things from your parents or do things without their knowledge? What happened?
[Have you ever had to tell them little white lies or refrain from telling them the whole truth about something? For example, when going out to a club or with male friends. Why do you think you need to conceal things from your parents? How would they react otherwise? Have you ever tried asking their permission or telling the whole "truth"?]

3) Can you describe some situations where you have gotten into trouble with your parents because of your friends? What happened? How were the situations resolved?
[Have any of these problems revolved around "going out" with friends/ leisure activities? Were any of these problems due to the gender of your friends, i.e. male friends vs. female friends? Did your parents stop talking to you, set up a curfew, scold you?]

4) What kinds of things have you done for the sake of the family honour/respect (izzat) or are expected to do?
[What type of priorities/responsibilities do you have to your family? Have you ever made any personal "sacrifices" where your family's interests came before your own (and vice-versa)? Can you illustrate with some examples?]

5) How has your relationship with your parents changed over the years? Has it become better or worse (or the same)? And in what ways? How are things different/ the same? Why do you think your relationship has changed in the direction that it has? Do you think it is because of you or your parents or both or some other influence (e.g. some family incident)?

6) How important is dating for you? What are your opinions on dating?
What do your parents think of dating, especially with respect to you? Do you agree with them? [If views are different, ask: Why do you think they wish this for you? How does this make you feel? What sort of compromise have you made at this point in time?]

7) Have you ever gone out on a "date" or was involved with someone as more than just friends, or even thought of pursuing a relationship?
Can you tell me about your experiences of dating/almost dating? What happened?
[What kinds of things did you worry about during this time of contemplating or pursuing a relationship? (e.g. being spotted, reputation, etc.) Were/Are your parents aware that you were/are involved with someone? If your parents did/do not know, what do you think would happen if they found out?]

8) What are your opinions on marriage? What are your parents' views on marriage? How do your views differ from your parents? How, if at all, will their views affect the type of marriage you will have?
What kinds of experiences have you had that have impacted your views on marriage? (e.g. seeing or hearing about relatives or friends who have been married, parents own relationship) How have your ideas about marriage changed over the years?

9) Do you follow/practice the Sikh religion? How important is religion to you?
How religious would you say your parents are? How important is religion to your parents?
Have you ever questioned your own/your parents' religious beliefs? How did you resolve this? Have you ever discussed your opinions on religion with your parents?
What types of experiences have you had with respect to religion, and how have these experiences impacted you?

10) What types of experiences have you had with regard to racism? Can you describe some situations that particularly stand out in your mind? How have these experiences impacted you in terms of who you are?
[Have these experiences influenced you to identify more strongly with your ethnic culture?]

11) Can you tell me about some of your experiences of being a woman with respect to the ethnic culture of your parents, i.e. with regard to being Punjabi Sikh? Was there anything particular negative or positive about these experiences?
[How do your parents treat you in comparison to your male sibling(s)/ male cousins? Are you treated differently? Why do you think this happens?]

12) Do you think the issues you face as a Punjabi Sikh woman are similar to or different than those that Punjabi Sikh males face? Could you elaborate?
Do you think the issues you face are similar to the issues that teen-agers/ young adult women of different ethnic backgrounds face, or do you think your situation is unique or only specific to young women from the Punjabi culture? Explain.

13) Why did you do the things you did, knowing that your parents would disapprove (eg. clubbing, dating, drinking, etc.)? Or, why did you choose not to do such things? How do you think your parents would have reacted? What would have been the consequences?

14) Did you experience any stress while growing up? What was this stress in relation to? How did you deal with this stress/stressful situations? Did you go to anyone for support? Did you ever confide in anyone about what you were experiencing at the time? Why or why not? How helpful was/were the person/persons?

15) How supportive have your parents been of your education / career choices? How influential have they been in achieving your educational / career goals?

16) Overall, how would you describe your experiences of growing up? Could you elaborate?

17) Can you think of other situations/issues, aside from those we discussed (parents, dating, marriage, religion) where the ethnic culture/values of your parents presents/ed problems for you?

18) Is there anything else you would like to discuss or ask me?
Do you have any comments or suggestions as to how the interview process may be improved?
Overall, what are your feelings/impressions of this interview?
[Has this interview been a positive/negative experience for you? Why or why not?]
Would you recommend this research to other women?

APPENDIX H: SUMMARY CHART OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Age	Occupation	Birth Order	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Father's Education	Mother's Education
Amar	19	Student	Eldest (of 2)	Self-Employed	Office Worker	Bachelor Degree	Bachelor Degree
Kiren	21	Student	Youngest (of 3)	Retired Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Bachelor Degree	Bachelor Degree
Jasmine	18	Student	Eldest (of 2)	Foreman	Retail Worker	Some High School	High School Equivalency
Raj	22	Employed	Youngest (of 3)	(Ex-sawmill worker) Self-Employed	Housewife	Bachelor Degree	Some High School
Anita	24	Student	Middle (of 3)	Sawmill Worker	Restaurant Worker	Some High School	Some High School
Raman	21	Employed	Eldest (of 3)	Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Some High School	Some High School
Sharon	24	Employed	Eldest (of 4)	Sawmill Worker	Farm Worker	Some High School	Some College
Sukhi	23	Student	Eldest (of 4)	Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Some High School	Some Elementary
Neena	20	Student	Eldest (of 3)	Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Some High School	Some High School
Rupy	16	Student	Youngest (of 4)	Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Some High School	Some Elementary
Bal	20	Student	2nd oldest (of 5)	Sawmill Worker	Housewife	Some High School	Some High School

APPENDIX H: CONTINUED

Name	Relationship with Parents	Closer to Any Parent	Dating Experiences	Currently has a Boyfriend	Suicide Attempts	Physically Harmed by Father	Ethnicity of Closest Peers
Amar	Okay	Neither	Y	Y	Y	N	White
Kiren	Okay	Neither	N	N/A	N	N	Indian
Jasmine	Good	Mother	N	N/A	N	N	Indian
Raj	Okay	Neither	Y	N	Y	N	White
Anita	Don't Know	Father (now)	N	N/A	Y	Y	Mixed
Raman	Don't Know	Mother	Y	Y	N	N	Mixed
Sharon	Fairly Good	Both	Y	Y	N	N	Indian
Sukhi	Good	Mother	Y	N	N	Y	White
Neena	Good	Mother	Y	N	Y	N	White
Rupy	Okay	Mother	N	N/A	N	N	Indian
Bal	Fairly Good	Mother	N	N/A	N	N	Coloured

Legend

Employed = meaning no longer in school and has achieved some kind of financial independence from parents

Y = Yes

N = No

N/A = Not Applicable

VITA

Surname: Mann-Kahalma Given Name: Perbeen

Place of Birth: North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1993 to 1997

Degrees Awarded:

B.A.	University of Victoria	1995

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship	1995-1997
Robert Hagedorn Graduate Fellowship	1996
President's Scholarship	1994
University of Victoria Alumni Undergraduate Scholarship	1994

Publications:

None

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Title of Thesis:

Intergenerational Conflict and Strategies of Resistance: A Study of Young Punjabi Sikh Women in the Canadian Context

Author [redacted]
Perbeen Mann-Kahalma
August 30, 1997