

IS 8000 Major Research Paper

Exploring Sikh youth in Toronto and issues of identity

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Exploring Sikh youth in Toronto and issues of identity

A major research paper presented to Ryerson University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Immigration and Settlement Studies.

By: Jagjeet Kaur Gill

Abstract

My paper investigates ten Punjabi-Sikh youth from the ages of 18 to 25, across Ontario, this study attempts to answer how Sikh youth identify themselves and what external and social influences affect perception and identity. As Punjabi-Sikh youth struggle to find their identity in the midst of competing expectations, they may face institutional and structural barriers that may further complicate their identity. While there is extensive literature on the reception of first generation Sikhs in Canada, there is minimal information on how second-generation Sikhs have integrated within the mainstream culture. There are many important questions to be answered, such as, do Western euro-centric values and beliefs by the mainstream contradict with traditional and cultural beliefs? How do youth accommodate some cultural and religious values over others? Are there multiple oppressions, which are in conflict with retaining an ethnic and cultural identity? How do the values, expectations, and beliefs of Punjabi-Sikh parents differ from their children's? How do youth negotiate their cultural and religious identity in the face of conflicting expectations from parents, school, and their community? These are just some of the questions that will be explored in this study.

Keywords: Punjabi-Sikh youth; identity; racism; Punjabi culture; Sikh religion;
Gudwaras

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	
Canada's Changing Diversity	3
The Sikh Diasporic Experience	5
Institutional Racism & White Privilege	7
Punjabi Culture or Sikhism? – Differentiating the two	7
Becoming Westernized: Between two worlds	9
Academic Achievement & Overcoming Racism	13
Gender Issues	15
Parenting	18
Limitations of Literature	19
Study/Inquiry	21
Participants	21
Methodology	23
Research Results	
Identity	26
Culture & Religion: "Kaur" values	29
Participation in Organizations	31
Gurdwaras- Pivotal and essential?	33
Interest in Sikhism?	35
Parental Expectations & Values	40
Gender Differences	45
School Influence & Racism	46
Summary/Discussion	48
Limitations of the study	53
Appendices	
Appendix A: Definitions & Terms	57
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	61
References	63

List of Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions & Terms	57
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	61

Introduction

Punjabi -Sikh youth, who are distinctly visible through their manner of dress, religious symbols, and/or the length of their hair, must juggle their cultural and religious identity in the face of conflicting expectations from parents and school. Many youth, especially those dealing with multiple oppressions, such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender, find it difficult to find a space for themselves in the context of their family, friends and the wider community, including competing expectations that are imposed on them. Sikh youth specifically must mediate conflicting demands from the mainstream culture, while navigating their own culture, ethnicity, religion and community influences.

Identity is a socially constructed, fluid concept that is an increasingly complex phenomenon for children and youth of immigrants, who are raised in the mainstream environment or Canadian milieu (Nayar, 2004 & Dhruvarajan, 2003). Youth, and Sikh youth in particular face conflicting messages of what it means to belong to the community, religious group, and the school institutions.

In the face of these competing challenges, those who are affected by this conflicted identity and morale, are the Sikh youth themselves, their parents, and the Punjabi/Sikh community who fear assimilation, in other words, giving up traditional values and beliefs to Western values that have been imposed on them. The social context for Punjabi-Sikh youth includes school officials, such as educators and school administrators who may unconsciously impose their own Euro-centric values (norms of the mainstream culture) on youth, not realizing that this may further cause dissonance and conflict in families. Further to the community and school administrators, broader social and political context is shaped by government officials through the multiculturalism policy.

While all youth may struggle to find an identity and become independent, racialized youth are doubly stigmatized as neither belonging completely to one group nor being completely Canadian and accepted by the mainstream. Today's immigrant youth are more culturally and ethnically diverse than older generations, as they represent one-third of the current immigrants entering Canada (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). While immigrant populations continue to both grow and diversify, many immigrant youth are confused and uncertain between Canadian mainstream culture and their parents' values and traditions (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). The Canadian Council of Social Development (2000) reports that while there appears to be literature on how immigrants have acculturated, adapted to the new country to which they immigrate to, there is little information on how youth manage (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). Further to this, there is little work done on second-generation Punjabi-Sikh youth. Compared to Canadian born youth, immigrant youth are less likely to have social supports and are more likely to be active in religious organizations and their religious faith (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). As many racialized youth, and more specifically Punjabi-Sikh youth struggle to find their identity in the midst of competing expectations, they may face institutional and structural racism that further complicate their identity. *Institutional racism* or institutional barriers may be defined as "established policies, rules, and regulations of an organization or institution [that] systemically reflect and produce differential treatment of various groups within that organization or institution and in society generally. These regulation are used to maintain social control and the status quo in favour of the dominant group" (James, 1999, p.135). While *structural barriers* or structural racism is "rooted in inequalities of society [that] operate to justify the allocation of racial groups to particular categories and class sites" (James, 1999, p.135).

This problem is also personally meaningful to me, as a Sikh youth who has gone through Canadian elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, where I felt that my culture and religion were negated, and removed from the curriculum. From my experiences, many members of older generations have also expressed that they feel as though the younger generations are removed from their culture and religion, and are becoming more distant from the traditional values, beliefs, and customs.

Through ten individual interviews with Punjabi-Sikh youth across Ontario, and by replicating studies done by previous scholars (Gobin, 1999; Bariana, 1997; & Hall, 1995), this study will attempt to answer how Sikh youth identify themselves and what external and social influences affect perception and identity.

Canada's Changing Diversity

Canada and Toronto are becoming increasingly diverse through rapid immigration trends. In Canada alone, the foreign born population (or the immigrant population) as defined by Statistics Canada (2004), increased from 16.1 % in 1991 to 18.4% in 2001. In Toronto, immigrants made-up 43.7% of the population in 2001 compared to 1991 where 38% of Toronto's population consisted of immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2004). Toronto also accommodates more immigrants than any other metropolitan area.

There also continues to be a dramatic shift in the source countries, to which immigrants are arriving from, rapidly changing Canada's racial make-up. This influx has been away from "traditional source countries" such as the United Kingdom and European nations and towards new immigrant groups, such as Asia, Africa, South and Central America, and the Caribbean (CTV, 2005a; Reuters, 2005; & deSilva, 1992). CTV (2005a) reports that the visible minority population grew 25 percent, six times the national growth rate, from the 1996 to the 2001 census, and by 2017, 1 in 3 individuals in Canada will belong to a visible minority group. Reuters

(2005) further reports that by 2017 visible minorities will outpace traditional white settlers, while more than one million of Toronto's minorities will consist of South Asians, and more than 735,000 will have Chinese origins. Both reports indicate that a highly racialized population exists, and will continue to persist over the coming years.

In addition to the changes in the racial make-up, the religions to which Canadians state they are affiliated has also shifted away from the mainstream. While there continues to be a high affiliation with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, 2001 was marked in increases in Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism as a result of increased immigration trends (Statistics Canada, 2003). While representing one percent of the overall population, Statistics Canada (2003) notes that those who identified themselves as being Sikh, grew from 147,440 in 1991 to 278,400 in 2001, an increase of 89 percent.

The Canadian Council of Social Development (2000) further reports that one-third of the immigrants that arrive are under the age of 25 (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). This indicates a growing segment of the immigrant population that may be unaccounted for through school policies and practices and settlement services practices dedicated to immigrants. The Canadian Council of Social Development (2000) argues that compared to adults, the challenges that immigrant children and youth face are unique, specifically in the Canadian school system and balancing the cultural values and behaviour expected of children and youth in their home country with those of their new country (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000, p.3).

Accordingly, due to the growing immigrant youth and Sikh population in a metropolis such as Toronto, there is an urgent need to consider how policies and practices infringe on youth's *culture*¹, *ethnicity* and religion. Those most vulnerable to policies and practices are

¹ All terms listed in Appendix "A" are italicized through this paper.

youth and adolescents because of their non-adult status, and their lack of say in decisions about the curriculum and school content.

Sikh Diasporic Experience

While Canada appears liberal in its policies towards immigrants, there has been malicious treatment of groups deemed “different” and because of the “*othering*” of individuals that would change Canada’s homogeneity. Jagpal (1994) notes that, unlike other immigrant communities, relatively few Sikh pioneers considered Canada home.

Their intention was to make money and return to India. They came to a cold and hostile environment, both literally and figuratively. Besides, language problems, poor education, lack of proper housing and health care, and culture shock, they faced racial discrimination and segregation (Jagpal, 1994, n.p).

Bali & Bal (1993) further note that Sikhs were “transient for so long and reluctant to bring their families to join them” (p.80). Johnston (1995) argues that Sikhs remained a comparatively small population because of restrictive policies and “repeated shuttling between two homes...while adapt[ing to] one country without completely abandoning another” (Bains & Johnston, 1995, xiii). Restrictive policies that restricted immigration from India, and specifically Sikhs, included the Continuous Journey Act and the Komagata Maru (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998). The Continuous Journey Act in 1908 set by the Canadian government required that immigrants arriving at any Canadian port must have a non-stop journey from their country of origin (Minhas, 1994). In 1914, the Komagata Maru that tried to challenge the Continuous Journey Act, carried 376 passengers, 340 who were Sikhs, was met with extreme hostility from the residents of Vancouver and was not allowed to disembark (Kazimi, 2003). Despite a lack of food and ill passengers, passengers that try to disembark were shot at, and after two months on the coast, the ship was turned back while local citizens cheered (Kazimi, 2003).

Minhas (1994) argues that public opinion in British Columbia in 1907 “strongly opposed” Sikh immigration and other immigration from India (p.12). In addition, to negative media portrayals of Sikhs as being uncivilized, dirty and diseased, while being unable to adapt to Canada’s climate (Singh, 1994), Sikhs were further segregated due to language, culture and the racist sentiments from the host population (Johnston as cited in Jagpal, 1994).

Due to restrictive immigration policies that prohibited immigration from India, very few females from India settled in Canada. Despite the lack of Sikh females, many Sikhs retained a strong religious identity, and relatively few Sikhs married outside their ethnic and religious group (Verma, 2002). Yet, to readily assimilate within Canada, the first male Sikh pioneers cut their hair and shaved their beards as a means to minimize their difference (Bains & Johnston, 1995). While, Gurdwaras or Sikh temples, continue to be a “pivotal place in the evolution of the Sikhs from a purely religious group, to an ethnic one” (Singh, 1991, p.131). While allowing for retention of the Sikh religion, Singh (1991) further mentions that “Gurdwaras function as a bulwark against assimilative influences exerted by the exotic life of Western culture” (p.131). In addition to religious activities, the Gurdwaras allow children to learn about Sikhism through Sunday language programs and religious instruction.

While it is important to note that blatant policies to prohibit Sikh migration are not as evident as they were in the 1900’s, The Points System (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998) and covert forms of institutional racism, such as the case recent case of a Sikh youth from Alberta who was prohibited from playing soccer in British Columbia, because of his turban (CTV, 2005b), policies that maintain the status quo, continue to allow the less than full integration of Sikhs. While there is extensive literature on the less than warm welcome and assimilation of first generation Sikhs in Canada, there is minimal information on how second-generation Sikhs have

integrated within mainstream culture, how they choose what values and beliefs to associate themselves with, and how they navigate between two worlds.

Institutional Racism and White Privilege

Racism today in Canada is not as evident, or overt and visible as it was twenty years ago, however, hidden racism is just as dangerous, in terms of its implications (Dumbrill, 2005). In other words, while overt or blatant racism can be damaging to a group or individual, covert or hidden racism is just as detrimental since it is masked and not easily identifiable. *Institutional racism*, policies and practices that maintain the status quo, is one form of covert racism. Dhruvarajan (2003) argues that racism in Canadian society is built into the institutional structures, which manifests itself through social practices, is a result of colonialism and imperialism practices (p.174). More so, all other religions, other than Christianity are deemed deviant by the mainstream (Dhruvarajan, 2003), which legitimates the stigmatization associated with non Euro-centric values.

In Dhruvarajan's (2003) interviews with Indo-Canadian youth, interviewees stated that their non-white skin was considered deficient by the mainstream and that this legitimated racist and discriminatory behaviour. One of interviewees reported the expectations and perceptions from their parents' experiences to do well.

My mom told me before, a long time ago, that we have to try harder because we are discriminated against. We have to work twice as hard in order to achieve the same sort of level or to be seen on the same level. I would say this is because I am East Indian and I wished that I was not. I was almost embarrassed to be one (Dhruvarajan, 2003, p.173).

Punjabi culture or Sikhism? – Differentiating the two

Sikhism is one of the youngest world religions, originating five hundred years ago in the region of Punjab India (Singh, 1993). Singh (1993) notes the fundamental principle behind Sikhism is "There is only One being and Truth is its Name," without a physical form that is

beyond space, time, and gender, distinguishing Sikhism from most religions (p.8). Although it may be difficult to define the underlying principles of the Sikh religion in a few words, the Department of National Defence (2004) outlines some significant characteristics of Sikhism that include; being a monotheistic faith; Sikh meaning “disciple” or “learner of truth” in the Punjabi language; and following the teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scriptures). More significant characteristics of Sikhism involve men and women as equals; tolerance of all religions, rejecting idol worship; rejection of the caste system; and religious rituals (Department of National Defence, 2004).

While there remain distinct characteristics of Sikhism, the Punjabi culture has blurred and has further complicated what it means to be Punjabi-Sikh. Furthermore, Western influences and conforming to the mainstream lifestyle and culture, have made it increasingly complex for Sikh youth to identify themselves. They must navigate, not only the pressures of the Western culture, but family, community, cultural and religious demands.

Since Sikhs represent 1 to 2 percent of India’s population (Singh, 1993), they are overwhelmingly outnumbered by Hindus. Consequently, many Sikhs follow cultural traditions, such as relegating women to the domestic sphere, the caste ideology and rituals that are in accord with the Hindu faith, yet have no basis in Sikhism (Jakobsh, 2003). Culturally, women are oppressed and relegated to the domestic realm, yet these ideals conflict with Sikhism, in which both men and women are equal. Bali & Bal (1993) explain that Sikhism has “comprehensive egalitarian objectives... Raising the status of women forms an essential part of its program. [Yet] the caste ideology of Hinduism has assigned to women, including those of the upper castes, a low status position” (p.228).

Since culture and religion are so intertwined, it is particularly difficult for actual members of the Punjabi-Sikh community to identify what is in accordance with the faith, and what is cultural. Furthermore, since culture is fluid, and relative to the geographic location, it makes it particularly difficult to identify what cultural values are. Subordination is particularly prominent within the South Asian community that restricts females from social activities, implying that it is their 'duty' to learn how to maintain a household, or no man will marry a woman that does not know how to cook. There appear to be double standards, in which females are viewed as the promiscuous, while males are the honour of the family. Consequentially, the stigma attached to females in the Punjabi culture forms oppression within the domestic sphere, where it is considered a woman's 'duty' to serve a man (Jakobsh, 2003). This subordination is further reflected within the public sphere, where the males in the family are wage earners, and benefit from the unpaid labour performed by females.

Other practices that are cultural practice, and not religious, include arranged marriages, dating, and dowries. There is no specific reference in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib that prohibits dating, yet it's justified as not being in alignment with "Sikh values" and inappropriate. While the caste ideology is still evident throughout India, caste and hierarchies, throughout western countries continue to be a significant practice. However, first generation Sikhs throughout North America identify this as a significant practice (Nayar, 2004). Furthermore, while justified as a cultural practice, dowries are strictly forbidden under Sikhism as written in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Verma, 2002).

Becoming Westernized: "Between two worlds"

The process of becoming "Canadian" or "Westernized" has long been studied in many ethnographies, however, research on Sikh youth in Toronto and identity is not readily available

in academic literature. Accordingly, little is known about Sikh youth in academic institutions and how they manage demands from both worlds. Many of today's Sikhs adapt western cultural values, while *assimilating*, accommodating (adapting) and *acculturating* beliefs more consistent with their own socializing group. While culture is fluid, many Canadian Sikhs have adapted multicultural traits and identities (Mahmood & Brady, 1999).

Many first generation immigrants view academic achievement as critical to overcoming racism that exists in Canadian society (Dhruvarajan, 2003 & Gobin, 1999) but parents also view Western values as conflicting with their own traditional values (Gobin, 1999 & Nayar, 2004). Biswas, as cited, in Kunz & Hanvey (2000) states that many immigrant parents find western culture too liberal, and many times disrespectful as children question or second-guess their decisions (p.1). Similarly, Dhruvarajan (2003) argues that identity for Indo-Canadian youth is complicated in the private and public realm, as there is a dichotomy between the Indian tradition and the public realm within the Canadian milieu (p.16). Singh (1994) also argues that conflicts between old values and new customs evoke stresses in the family and result in a re-examination of life styles and value systems (p.84). Dating, career choices, education, and marriage are usually individual decisions in the West, yet eastern cultures such as South Asian parents usually make life decisions for their children (Biswas, as cited in Kunz & Hanvey, 2000).

Dhruvarajan (2003) argues that Indo-Canadian, second-generation youth in Canada want to be accepted on their own terms, yet they face alienation. While they want to be accepted as "Canadian" and still retain a high affiliation with being "Indian", their perceived differences are stigmatized. South Asian youths not only experience problems many teenagers face, such as the generation gap with their parents, but their "Indianness", as marked by religion, caste, and ethnic

and cultural identifiers marginalizes and oppresses them further to the lower echelons of society (Dhruvarajan, 2003).

Gobin's (1999) research on Sikh youth reveals acts of defiance and guilt about lying to their parents (p.252) about where they are, since parents do not approve of any socialization outside of school. Dhruvarajan (2003) further argues that South Asian youth feel that parents place "unreasonable demands" on them to act in an "ideal manner" of being Indian, which is in conflict with how to "act" outside the home. Dating, marriage and socializing with the opposite sex appear to be significant issues raised by many youth (Dhruvarajan, 2003 & Gobin, 1999).

Hall (1995) also describes the dissonance associated with belonging to two distinct cultures:

Markers of 'Asian' racial and cultural inferiority have been translated into signs of class inequality. To choose to remain "too Indian" has consequences of its own. To seem "too Indian" (in dress, lifestyle, language or manner) is to accept the markers of an inferior status, or to choose to be what the denigrating signs of race and class imply that "Asians" are, namely "immigrants" and "Pakis" (Hall, 1995, p.260)

While Hall's (1995) research is on Sikh youth in Britain, she notes that ethnicity is a source of culture conflict as adolescent Sikhs feel that they are being pulled between two ways of life:

...I go to school and get Westernized ideas pushed into my brain day in and day out. When I get home, I only get it when my mom and dad shout at me or when there's a lecture given to us... I mean... you get pulled between two ways of life... I mean the thing is that really bugs me, you can't be religious and be Westernized. You have to be...religious or be Westernized. *You can't have both of two worlds...* (Emphasis added) (Hall, 1995, pp.246-7)

Similarly, Dhruvarajan (2003) explains that many Indo-Canadian parents also have "core and peripheral values". They will negotiate a balance of values, yet will not overstep certain perimeters. Amongst the core values are marriage and dating that are not negotiable, while peripheral values such as eating habits are open to discussion (Dhruvarajan, 2003, p.16).

Hall (1995) further uses the term “fragmented consciousness” to describe Sikh teenagers in Britain who are neither completely English nor Indian and adapt to different cultural fields individually. Bhachu (1985b) whose study involved Sikhs from East Africa who settled in Britain, similarly describes youth not having a sense of belonging.

Bariana (1997), Gobin (1999), and Hall (1995) also address native language retention. The educational system’s incapability to incorporate and legitimize the use of Punjabi as a mother tongue (Singh, 1994) allows language classes to be ghettoized in the margins of before or after the regular school day. Accordingly, many Punjabi Sikhs are more fluent in the dominant language, English, and less so in Punjabi (Hall, 1995, p.254), creating a distance between the first and second generation Sikhs.

Hall (1995), Gobin (1999), and Bariana (1997) also note that the values in Western schools differ from those of the Punjabi and Sikh cultures instilled at home. For instance, Gobin (1999) points out that Sikh youth have a “profound obligation to their parents” (p.290) and familial obligations are valued, while individualistic concerns, regarded as being “Canadian” are looked down upon.

At schools certain standards are approved and rewarded over others: those demonstrating independent thinking, confident and assertive self-presentation, self-direction, and individual autonomy are highly regarded (Hall, 1995, pp. 250-251).

Values of collectivity, the family unit, and showing respect to elders through silence, however, are not values taught in the curriculum. Similarly, Singh (1994) notes that Canadian schools place a high value on liberal education, individual initiative, independent decision making, and privacy which are norms that conflict with the Punjabi concept of “seva”- selfless service (p.105). Dhruvarajan (2003) also contends that many Indo-Canadian parents “know best,

as attributed to their age and experience” and look down on “unbridled individualism of the west and privilege familistic values of their own ethnic culture” (p.169).

Singh (1994) also points out that a constant struggle between younger and older generations is further perpetuated through a communication gap. The general perception by first generation immigrants, Dhruvarajan (2003) argues, is that their culture is considered inferior by mainstream society, by way of educational practices, and accordingly they have maintained a social distance from the dominant groups. Yet, youth do not view the dominant culture as corrupting, and want to be accepted by the mainstream (Dhruvarajan, 2003, p.170).

Hall (1995), as cited in Ballard (1982), similarly describes youth as dealing with two different and conflicting ideologies.

Children of South Asian origin in Britain are certainly exposed to, and participate in, two very different cultural worlds. At home parents expect conformity to the norms of co-operation, respect and familial loyalty... At school, however, children are exposed to a wholly contrary set of values and expectations... As a result of the very fundamental contradictions between these two worlds, many young Asians feel themselves to be faced with acute dilemmas as to how they should organize their lives. However, most have long since learned to cope with these contradictions by switching their modes of behaviour depending on the context in which they find themselves (Ballard, 1982, pp.195-196 as cited in Hall, 1995, p.248).

Hall (1995) further notes that Sikh youth have many layers to their social identity that include race, class, and gender and have multiple layers of cultural identity available to them through communities and schools, while consistently constructing new ways of being British-Sikh (p.244).

Academic Achievement & Overcoming Racism

The Canadian Council of Social Development (2000) reports that many immigrant youth experience racism, ostracism, and bullying which is further propagated through school administrators and educators who stigmatize racialized youth due to their ethnicity, culture,

and/or accent (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000, p.13). Rather than being part of the solution, school officials are part of the problem of racism (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000) yet this racism is covert, and youth express little hope of overcoming it. Dhruvarajan's (2003) findings also suggest despair in overcoming racism in Canadian society by youth who found that their best defense is through educational achievement. Dhruvarajan (2003) reports an increased emphasis on education, by Indo-Canadians at large, as a way of obtaining social and economic mobility. Gobin (1999) also suggests that Punjabi-Sikh families place a high value on education as means of overcoming barriers that may exist in the Canadian milieu.

Bhachu (1985a) points out that Sikh families have become highly competitively motivated to succeed, as social mobility and status are linked to educational achievement. While there is a high importance placed on educational achievement, Gobin (1999) points out that Punjabi parents stress the importance of not becoming *too* Westernized. Dhruvarajan (2003) describes the pressures that many Indo-Canadian youth may face, as their parents have immigrated to Canada in search for better economic conditions. Furthermore, there is a strong belief that in order to protect children from discrimination, they have to be well educated and attain good professions (Dhruvarajan, 2003). Dhruvarajan (2003) further argues that many youth continue to face discrimination and racism throughout their schooling until they find a comfortable space for themselves within a peer group (p.16).

Although Sikh youth cannot disguise their race, class, and ethnicity, Hall (1995) notes that academic success is used as a way of balancing out their inferiority, as high academic success and achievement are linked to *social capital* and *social mobility*. Further, Hall (1995) states that Sikh youth feel "the most English" at school when they are not in the "gaze of their parents" (p.256).

Gender Issues

In Canada, similar to India, Indian girls are given less freedom, as females continue to embody tradition and culture (Dhruvarajan, 2003 & Mahmood & Brady, 1999). Dhruvarajan (2003) contends that not only is chastity critical before marriage, but family honour is tied to the daughters' "impeccable moral conduct" which parents have a duty to protect (p.169). The Sikh Religious Society (1994) notes that religiously sanctioned gender roles and the "double standard" are increasingly growing problems for Sikh youth in America. The Sikh Religious Society (1994) further notes that the females' role, in the Punjabi culture, consists of girls that must be "protected," submissive, shy, and quiet, while Dhruvarajan (2003) confirms that parents place a "tighter grip" (p.175) on females, and a tendency to be more protective and controlling of females.

Dhruvarajan (2003) further argues that the sexual double standard has benefited men who are freed of domestic responsibilities, yet a social movement of modernism has led to the gradual erosion of patriarchal values, toward more egalitarian gender roles (p.171). However, this movement has been less pronounced in the South Asian community. The activities and social interactions of boys do not get questioned, while girls are to assume a domestic role (Sikh Religious Society, 1994). The Sikh Religious Society (1994) argues that this leads to resentment toward the parents, while parents feel as though they have their daughter's best interest at heart.

Hall (1995) notes that the experiences of Sikh females and males differ through acculturation in schools, whereby males are given more freedom and 'equality' than females. Punjabi males are given more freedom to go out with friends and socialize, meanwhile Punjabi females are restricted in their social activities.

Other issues of gender inequality include the value of education. Dhruvarajan (2003) argues that much like India, expectations for educational achievement in Canada for Indo-Canadian males are higher than for females. Similar to Dhruvarajan (2003), Bhachu (1985a) notes that the male's education is far more valued than female's education and achievement. While Bhachu's (1985a) work may be considered specific to the United Kingdom, Bariana's (1997) work in Canada, suggests through interviews with school officials, that male education is still more valued than a female's educational attainment. Bariana (1997) further argues that:

...gender-based cultural differences determine the freedom, personal worth and academic opportunities allowed Sikh boys and girls, a view which contravenes teachers' middle class values (pp.245-246).

Hall (1995) further describes how females are especially restricted in their socialization outside of the home; yet use school as a tool through which to gain more freedom, often at the expense of their education. Sikh females may be restricted in their education since higher education, particularly post-secondary and schooling away from home is seen as a lack of control from the parents' perspective, but is seen as a "way out" of domestic and familial responsibilities by females (Gobin, 1999).

Bariana (1997) through her ethnographic study suggests that mainstream Western cultural beliefs are believed to impede and erode Sikh adolescent values and compliance. Furthermore, Bariana (1997) states that educators are also "torn between their own personal education philosophy and the balance of Punjabi cultural issues through educating students, and must negotiate a neutral role between the home and the school" (p.222). School officials, Bariana (1997) also finds, have to "tread a fine line" in respecting the cultural values, while upholding the administrative and legal responsibilities (p.239). Bhachu (1985a), however, notes that while

teachers may recognize that many parents want to maintain a traditional upbringing, it is the educator's role to instill "Euro-centric" and "Judao-Christian" values (p.225)

Since education is seen as a way to achieve higher status and social mobility, Bhachu (1985a) notes that Sikh families have become highly competitively motivated to succeed, as status through achievement is most valued (p.19). Similarly, Dhruvarajan (2003) argues that Indo-Canadian parents stress the importance of high academic achievement as a means of overcoming institutional and structural barriers. Gobin (1999) however, notes that this competitive motivation is contradictory to many educators' personal philosophy, that students must be academically and intrinsically motivated to learn. Accordingly, educators feel that Punjabi students are not orientated towards higher learning for the right reasons. Bhachu (1985a) also notes that many Punjabi families place a high value on "purpose-oriented" education and not on abstract knowledge, such as art and music. Gobin's (1999) study similarly recognizes the lack of participation in classes and activities by Sikh students that are considered "recreational" as opposed to being "professionally oriented". Bariana (1997) notes that Punjabi parents place a heavy emphasis on math and science to lead to professional degrees, yet not all students have the capacity to be exceptional in these subjects whereas as aesthetic courses such as a drama, art, music and physical education and French, are not seen as practical.

The biases and lack of a cultural sensitivity reveal that administrators and many teachers have their own cultural biases and are unwilling to accommodate students, irrespective of the situation they may be in, while some teachers recognize the need for an inclusive curriculum (Bariana, 1997, p.258) through an education about diversity. Bhachu (1985a) notes that while there is discrimination from teachers, many students are made to internalize this, and told by their parents to "behave" in school (p.21).

Parenting

Bariana (1997) implies that individuals do not live in a vacuum, apart from the

...invasion of dominant, cultural institutions, services and laws which govern our family life. [Accordingly many dilemmas exist, including to] what extent can/should Sikh parents be coerced and shaped by mainstream, institutional values and beliefs? p.217.

Furthermore, Bhachu (1985a) and Bariana (1997) both contend that parents, due to discrimination and isolation, attempt to maintain their own traditional and cultural values, for emotional security.

The Sikh Religious Society (1994) reports that parents have become distant from their daughters who want answers as opposed to lectures about the opposite sex, peer pressure and double standards. Bariana (1997) notes that a "culture conflict" occurs, whereby children accept Canadian culture, cultural accommodation, and challenge their parents. Bariana (1997) further argues that Sikhs view education as a "necessary evil, a biased, Canadian curriculum which promotes the internalization of a White socialization experience, thus creating dissonance between the Sikh culture and Canadian culture" (p.216). Singh (1990) also argues that many children are trained to be critical and rational, and are therefore questioning traditions and values to which many religious leaders are not trained to answer.

The Sikh Religious Society (1994) has further found that parents have confirmed that unhealthy relationships with their adolescents occur, when the teenager feels that parents will not make an attempt to understand; consequently leading to a "double-life" and distrust. Problems are particularly prevalent amongst teenagers who are facing puberty and trying to find their own identity and "acceptance gained by conforming to certain norms of that society" (Sikh Religious Society, 1994 pp.312-313). Bariana (1997) notes that parents recognize education as equating to social mobility and economic success, yet do not appreciate the push of dominant culture and

values. Yet, teachers do not directly reinforce the dominant ideology, this is implicitly suggested through practices such as “anglicizing the student’s name to make it easier to spell and pronounce” (Bariana, 1997, p.224) and peer pressure to conform with the Westernized lifestyles and values. Bariana (1997) further notes that Sikh parents are overwhelmed with pressures since they are minorities and small numbers cannot compare to the majority and mainstream.

Limitations of literature

Through an examination of the literature, it appears that there continues to be a lack of academic material dedicated strictly to Sikh and Punjabi youth in particular, within the Greater Toronto Area and Canada generally. Many questions remain unaddressed: How and why do youth accommodate some cultural and religious values over others? What are the multiple oppression which are in conflict with retaining an ethnic and culturally identity? Do the values, expectations, and beliefs of Punjabi-Sikh parents differ from their children’s? To what extent is the school influential to both youth and their parents? Do the youth themselves want language, culture and religious support? Are there different educational and familial expectations for sons and daughters? These are all questions that need to be examined more diligently. Singh (1994) argues that an understanding of the Punjabi and Sikh cultural underpinnings, the Sikh home, and the Punjabi cultural upbringing, must be recognized, to avoid imposing dominant ideologies (p.100) onto minority groups.

Although research (Singh, 1990) suggests that there has been a renewed interest by youth in religious activities, there continues to be a critical Punjabi language gap that has not been fully addressed. Singh (1990) argues that “without an adequate knowledge of Punjabi, the language of the Guru Granth Sahib, the new generation of Sikhs is in danger of being theologically illiterate” (n.p.). Accordingly, there is a lack of language and cultural services and religious support

available for youth. The minimal language supports that are available are segregated to after-school or the weekends, signaling that the Punjabi language is not as important as the English language. Singh (1994) further argues that nothing has been set up within the education system to either understand the Sikh religion or to foster its development. More so, the number of settlement services available to Sikh youth that may help facilitate and foster integration is not known and is limited to the Gurdwaras. The Canadian Council of Social Development (2000) reports that services for family and children, and specifically Ethno-cultural services are essentially non-existent and poorly funded.

While Gurdwaras are critical to religious retention, there are no studies to examine their importance to youth. The Gurdwaras have been relegated to supporting first-generation Sikhs, while no information exists on how they support second-generation youth. Hans (2003) contends that the

Gurdwara is an overarching cultural site for the diasporic Punjabi community especially [up until] the 1970s when most of the Punjabi immigration in Canada came from the Sikhs (p. 218).

While Hans (2003) focuses on the Sikh population in British Columbia, the Gurdwaras across Canada continue to be pivotal in retaining religious, cultural and language identity. Hans (2003) further argues that Gurdwaras allow for cohesion of the diasporic community and in recent times have become not only a place of worship, but have also emerged as a community centre and a cultural space.

Hall (2004) states that there is a lack of current literature that has moved beyond assimilation, acculturation, and accommodation. The current literature on the immigrant experience is conceptualized in terms of assimilation and acculturation, while little work has been done “national-identity formation and its relationship to immigrant incorporation and

cultural change” (p.109). Accordingly, more research is needed to focus on the “host society’s” reception of the immigrant community (Hall, 2004), issues of marginalization, and fostering an inclusive school curriculum and multiculturalism.

Study/Inquiry

Given the gaps and criticism related to the available literature, my research will examine how Punjabi-Sikh identify themselves, their participation in religious organizations, the importance of Gurdwaras, culture and the religion, parental expectations and values, gender differences, school influence and racism. I will collect and present data that will try to uncover and analyze issues related to how Punjabi-Sikh youth mediate conflicting demands from the mainstream culture, while navigating their own culture, ethnicity, religion and community influences. Through ten individual interviews with Punjabi-Sikh youth across Ontario, and by replicating studies done by previous scholars (Gobin, 1999; Bariana, 1997; & Hall, 1995), this study will attempt to answer how Sikh youth identify themselves and what external and social influences affect perception and identity.

Participants

Participants were recruited from many census tracts throughout the Greater Toronto Area. To build a rapport with other youth in the community, I was involved in many meetings as member of the Guru Gobin Singh Ji Foundation at the Scarborough Gurdwara. Members of the Guru Gobin Singh Ji Foundation meet monthly to discuss upcoming events in the community, and the organization allows youth to develop leadership qualities, responsibility, commitment, and empowerment (GGSCF). The meetings are also open to any youth who wishes to volunteer, so there is a consistent flow of new youth who enter meetings on a monthly basis.

Through the meetings at the Guru Gobin Singh Ji foundation and discussions with other youth, I was able to recruit ten participants. For the purposes of this project, a quota sample (Neuman, 2004) was used to understand the perspectives of males and females, and five males and five females were interviewed. This ensured that the sample was fixed, while allowing for some differences and for an equal representation of both sexes (Neuman, 2004). A purposive sample (Neuman, 2004), in other words, getting all possible individuals that fit the criteria for this study (p.138) was used as I was interested in the perspectives of Sikh youth and only youth who belonged to the Sikh faith were interviewed. While the original proposal was intended to focus on Sikh youth between the ages of 18 and 24, the scope was widened to include Sikh youth between the ages of 18 to 25. Three of the participants that had been recruited or had been obtained through the “snowball” technique (Bryman, 2001), were 25 years old, and the scope was broadened to include these youth, rather than exclude them.

To ensure the confidentiality of all the participants, Singh, which is a name that refers to a lion and a middle name given to all Sikh males, was used to refer to all male participants, while Kaur, which refers to princess and a middle name given to all Sikh females, was used to refer to all female participants.

While not intentional, all participants will or are enrolled in post-secondary education through a university. One participant, Singh 4, will be starting university in September, while Singh 2, Singh 5, and Kaur 3, respectively had completed their degrees, within the last year. All other participants were currently completing their degrees at their respective universities. Their programs of study included Fashion Design, Information Technology Management, Law, Sciences, Engineering, Humanities, and Business and Human Resources.

Participants were from various areas across Ontario. Two participants were from Brampton while one interviewee was completing his law degree in Ottawa and resided there throughout the school term. Other participants were from Caledon, Richmond Hill, Scarborough, Mississauga, North York, and Downtown Toronto. Furthermore, participants were represented from all three universities in the Greater Toronto Area.

While the length and style of hair varies, coincidentally all male participants, Singhs, were visible Sikhs, as evident through their turbans or patka (a type of headdress males, usually younger boys wear) and beards. While all males studied had some marked identity, all females that had participated did not dress in traditional clothes or had not taken amrit (been baptized), as evident through their standard Western clothing.

Methodology

The timeline for the research was as follows: Ryerson Ethics Approval was obtained in early July, interviews were conducted throughout the month of July, transcribing took place in early August, and the analysis and final paper was completed by the first week of September.

For the purposes of this project, qualitative research was used, as the nature of the topic, identity, is a complex phenomenon that is constructed individually through various variables that quantitative research cannot answer (Neuman, 2004). Qualitative interviewing, more specifically, was used, as the interviewer requires detailed answers. Qualitative research also allowed for an understanding of the perceptions of the participants from their own perspectives (Bryman, 2001). Furthermore, qualitative research allows for a follow-up on or clarifying points, ideas, and insights that may not otherwise be evident through quantitative research. Responses were recorded through audio recordings. Audio recordings were also a critical step to this project, as the researcher was not only interested in *what* the participants said, but *how* they

said it (Bryman, 2001). Audio recordings also allowed for ongoing analysis of the information, since the researcher had continuous access to it.

The research strategy that was employed for the purposes of this research project was the narrative inquiry (Bryman, 2001). This research method was employed as it allowed for a descriptive analysis and authenticity from the youth, as it was their voices and perspectives. In other words, through the narrative analysis, the researcher can better understand the views of the youth themselves as they recall and identify issues, by giving a voice to those who own it. This method was chosen over ethnographic research (Neuman, 2004), which requires extensive participant observation, and rapport with the interviewees that the interviewer was not able to build, due to time constraints. Although complex, the narrative perspective has allowed for a descriptive analysis of events, themes, and influences on Sikh youth. Through the ethnographic and narrative approach, the social reality of Sikh youths, as they experience it through their social lens, and how specific details were constructed, came through with interviews, through their points of view. The views of the participants did not necessarily reinforce what was already known and examined through the existing literature and studies.

Furthermore, the narrative approach allows for a non-hierarchical relationship, and reciprocal relationship between the interviewee and the participants (Bryman, 2001). More so, the researcher was interested in privileging voices that have been relegated to the margins of society or negated by hegemonic structures, as discussed in the literature review.

Due to time and financial constraints, participants chosen were though a convenience sample (Neuman, 2004), as the Guru Gobin Singh Ji Foundation is an organization that has already been established, while both geographical and practical access were taken into consideration.

For the purposes of this project, I conducted ten individual interviews based on semi-structured questions (see *Appendix 'A'* for *Interview Protocol*). I also replicated many interview questions from Denise Gobin's (1999) dissertation "The differential incorporation of racial minority youth: Indo-Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean and Punjabi Sikh Teens in Toronto and surrounding areas". Since the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner (Bryman, 2001), it allowed me to probe and clarify answers and help focus the conversation and questions towards the original intended problem. Accordingly, many participants could clarify terms that were unclear, and gave control to participants who may not have wanted to answer. The semi-structured questions were also used, to allow me to have some guidelines, while permitting personal opinions, beliefs and values to originate via prompts. Through prompts and probing, I was allowed to pick up on issues that may elicit significant emotions and elicit the interviewee for more information. As more interviews were conducted, more themes and patterns had emerged that allowed the researcher to ask the remaining participants about specific ideas that appeared.

As a British-Sikh-Indo-Canadian, I constantly longed for a space where I belonged, neither completing belonging to one group, and feeling disconnected from my own cultural and religious group, because of language barriers and the stigma attached to being "different". The demands from Western influences, school and peers, while understanding the perspectives and rearing of my parents, made it difficult for me to navigate my own identity. The various layers

of my roots and identity further complicated who I was and where I belonged. While longing to “fit in”, I negated my own ethnicity, culture, and religion, for fear of being segregated amongst my peers. This led me to further disassociate myself from my roots, while impeding my own understanding of what it meant to be a Punjabi and a Sikh female. I could not explain to my peers *why* I was different; I just knew I was different, from the active gaze of others, and my skin colour. Throughout the course of this study, I was both a researcher and a participant. I listened, felt, hurt, related and understood much of the experiences that many of the participants discussed. Punjabi-Sikh youth and the various influences, experiences, and relationships, affected me on a personal basis, and gave me a sympathetic perspective of what the youth narrated to me.

Research Results

Identity

While identity is fluid and dependent on the geographic location where an individual resides, it is of particular interest to note that none of the ten participants identify themselves as only Canadian, while 6 of the 10 participants were born in Canada. Singh 1 for example, identified himself as a Sikh-Canadian, a hyphenated person, in which his religious values were significantly more important. When asked if he had always identified himself as a Sikh-Canadian, he stated that it had changed over the years.

Umm, before I would probably say that I'm Canadian- Sikh-Canadian or an Indo-Canadian but, I guess I hadn't gotten more confidence in like- about my religion and learned more about it, and I think that the people around me changed- I've been more confident being a Sikh, as I've grown older. – Singh 1

Accordingly, Kaur 3 and Kaur 4 had also stated, that as they have matured and learned more about the culture and religion, they have identified themselves as being Sikh.

Singh 1 further felt that being Canadian describes the geographical space that he occupies, rather than his identity.

Interviewer: "Are you Sikh before Canadian?"

Singh 1: "Well, not- Well being a Sikh like defines the way I live my life, like the principles and the morals I live by everyday, right? Being a Canadian means I live in Canada and I'm proud to be Canadian too but, the way I live my day to day life is based on being a Sikh, not on being a Canadian."

It is clear that this youth feels that there are values and beliefs attached to being Canadian, to which he does not sense he belongs to. Conversely, Kaur 4 feels that there is no one-way of being Canadian. She attributes this to the influence of American culture, but further adds, that she does not know what Canadian culture is, since there is no typical or one way of being Canadian.

Kaur 5, who had lived in a remote area of Ontario, where she was the only Sikh in her school, had felt that she was constantly reminded that she did not belong or fit in, and consequently, not Canadian.

I don't know, probably Punjabi-Sikh. I don't think I'm just Canadian. I don't feel Canadian completely, maybe 'cause of where I was raised. I was reminded that I wasn't. So, I don't think, it's I don't associate myself that way, say I'm Punjabi-Sikh... Yeah, like whenever I felt "maybe I do fit in" you're always kind of reminded, quickly that, no, you're this. It doesn't really bother me, I kind of felt it was a good thing. I don't want to forget that.- Kaur 5

While some youth noted that being Canadian is equated to tolerance and acceptance, many felt that they were not Canadian, even though they were born and raised in Canada.

Others appeared to have a fragmented identity, to which they belonged to several groups, and did not know how to identify themselves.

Singh 4: "I guess you can be both there are people that say first I'm Sikh then I'm that. I am Sikh and my background is Indian but I am Canadian. I was born in Denmark..."

Interviewer: "So if you had to check of a box or something?"

Singh 4: "I'd say Indian if they didn't have Sikh but they are to different things. So Sikh and Indian."

Multiple layers, as identified by Singh 4, may in fact increase the complexity and perplexity, to which a youth, and specifically, immigrant youth identify themselves by. From the language and hesitation in Kaur 4's interview, it appeared that she too was uncertain about what group she belonged to.

Kaur 4: To me (pause). I'm not a hyphenated person. Most people say I'm Canadian-Punjabi, I'm Canadian-Sikh. I say I'm Indian-Sikh. I'm Indian, then I'm Sikh, then I'm Canadian. For me, being Sikh is who I am, and then Canadian is an aspect of me.

Interviewer: You said Indian first. Would you say your Indian before you're Sikh?

No, I would say I'm Indian... Indian. Yeah, I would say I'm Indian just because if I said Sikh, they wouldn't know immediately, what Sikh is. So, I think Indian would be easier to say. But, if I had the choice, I probably would say Sikh... I think a lot of people in our community here, when people come to the Indian community, and you say Sikh, they understand. But, if you were out in college or something, and somebody asked what's your religion, I'd say Sikh. And then they'd say, where are you from, I'd say I'm Indian. I don't know why I would do that, but I just that's the way...

Although Kaur 4 had said that she's not a hyphenated person, she said that she was Indian-Sikh, but had later pointed out in the interview that her identity had changed over the years. She stated that when she was asked as a child what group she belonged to, she said Canadian, but that she knew that she was different, and an Indo-Canadian. Furthermore, she stated that her maturity was linked to her knowledge of her culture and religion and realizing that she was Sikh, Indian, and Canadian.

It was also found that the way youth identified themselves, signaled the importance and values attributed to that label.

If I'm not a Sikh, then I'm Canadian which is like- There's different values, different like teachings. If I'm Sikh, I know what I'm supposed to behave like, I know what I'm supposed to value, I know [what] to be like. – Kaur 1

Kaur 3, like many other youth, identify themselves as being Sikh, but say that they had changed the way they identified themselves over the years. Furthermore, the way a youth identified themselves, suggest that while females have few distinguishing characteristics that may categorize them as being Sikh, many of the females stated that they were Sikh first, yet visible Sikh males did not necessarily identify themselves as being Sikh first.

Culture and Religion- "Kaur" Values

A unique phenomenon uncovered throughout the analysis of the various interviews, was the perplexity and dichotomy of both the culture and religion. Researchers and ethnographers have also made this mistake. For instance, Mahmood & Brady (1999), who conducted research with several Sikh women, were told by the participants that they were mistaking the Punjabi culture with Sikhism. While some youth noted that there is a "conflicting nature" between the two, many confused culture and religion, and were unclear as to where the division between both lay. For instance, when participants in my study were asked what the cultural and religious values of the Punjabi-Sikh community were, many had not recognized, or been clear that this was a two-part question. In other words, many youth did not recognize or note that there was a division between culture and religion, and did not make this distinction in their response.

This confusion is not specific to Sikh youth. For instance, egalitarian female and male roles are essential components of Sikhism, yet Punjabi cultural values conflict with this ideology (Bali & Bal, 1993). For example, women through the Punjabi culture are relegated to the domestic realm, implied as their "duty", while this conflicts with Sikhism that believes both men and women are equal. Furthermore, in the Punjabi culture, dowries are still an acceptable practice, yet dowries are strictly forbidden under Sikhism as written in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Verma, 2002). Aligned with Mahmood & Brady (1999) arguments, Tsolidis (2001) further argues that culture is dynamic and reacting with the ethnicities of the nation.

This confusion was also evident through the interviews conducted. When Singh 1 was asked what he thought the central and cultural religious values were of the Sikh community, he stated that they were “hardworking people, value status and education”. However, it should be noted that these are Punjabi, cultural values, not religious values, associated with Sikhism. When Singh 1 was asked about which values, beliefs and customs he choose to adapt, and which he shed, he later noted the distinction.

Yeah like, well a lot of people hold on to the caste system, right? That’s like a cultural thing. And the way we were brought up was to look at that too, but at the same time I don’t agree with it. So, that’s one thing that... I wouldn’t hold on to, based on the Punjabi culture. And, like, there’s more like... Like, Sikhism has equality right? But Punjabi culture doesn’t, so that’s a conflict in itself. And like in Canada, there’s actually equality too, right? - Singh 1

While there is no religious basis for it, caste continues to be associated with Sikh values, while it is a Hindu belief and has no basis in Sikhism (Tatla, 1999). It is through this knowledge and his strong affiliation with the religion and culture, that Singh 1 notes that he consciously has chosen to shed this particular value.

Other youth participants frequently had also mistaken Sikhism to be similar with the Punjabi culture. Kaur 3 was also asked about cultural and religious values.

Cultural values? Umm, it would be...(pause). I can’t remember now, there’s the three things that are like the foundation of the Sikhism which is like serving the needy, umm, like always sharing your earnings, and there’s one last one.- Kaur 3

It is significant to note that the line between culture and religion is so blurred and so well ingrained within the community, many cannot distinguish and differentiate between the two.

Other participants, who appeared to be more involved and more conscious of Sikh issues, noted that their culture and religion, while often confused, cannot be “synonymous” like many Punjabi-Sikhs believe it to be. For instance, when Singh 3 was asked how he viewed the Sikh religious and cultural community, he clarified the distinction and stated that cultural values were

specific to the geographic regions where Sikhs lived.

I don't think that Sikhs have any culture. I think Punjabi culture is associated with Sikhism but there is a difference there. Punjabi culture, in my opinion, is completely different. So, you can't equate culture with Sikhism, because there are Sikhs all over the world grow in different environments, and environments create your culture, right? That's not to say Sikhs-Punjabis don't follow the Punjabi culture 'cause that's where most Sikhs come from....people believe that Sikhism and Punjabi is synonymous, but I disagree with that. But also, there's a growing Sikh population in Russia, Chili, New Mexico, California, for cultural values, those states have different cultural norms. I wouldn't say Sikhs have a specific Sikh culture. – Singh 3

Singh 2 also noted that cultural and religious values, are in themselves “contradictory”:

Umm, religious values promoting- should be about promoting equality... to share, to donate, right? Culturally, I guess is somewhat contradictory. [It's] to be a lot more egotistical at times. And be a lot more big headed and stand up for your own self. So I think the religious and cultural values are pretty arbitrary to what they should be, and conflicting with each other. – Singh 2

While some youth noted the conflicting nature of the Punjabi culture and the Sikhism, many had not drawn attention to the inconsistencies and how they play out in the domestic and public realm.

Participation in organizations

In order to have a better understanding of the experiences of Punjabi-Sikh youth, youth were interviewed to understand the lived experiences in conjunction with the literature available. It was interesting to note, that all ten participants were involved in some way or another with a religious organization, institution and/or group through the community or their university. For instance, youth were involved in a the Sikh Student Associations at their respective universities, Sunday or language classes, taught younger children Gutka (a form of martial arts), were involved in Sikh camps and/or Sikh retreats for themselves or as an instructor, in community

celebrations, or organizations such as the Guru Gobin Singh Ji Foundation. However, the connectedness that youth felt to the religious and cultural community was not directly correlated with their involvement in an organization or group. For instance, while Kaur 5 had been fairly religious growing up and was part of the Sikh Student Association at her university, she had stated that on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing not connected, and 10 really connected, she felt that she was a “4”.

...Only because I grew up in a small community where there weren't too many Sikhs, Punjabi youth. So, I kind of felt disconnected in that. And so, that kind of carried through.

Interviewer: “Okay. And even now when you're in Toronto?”

Kaur 5: “It's about the same, 'cause when you're brought up a certain way, it's hard to just change. You know what I mean? You're so disconnected for so long, that you just can't switch over. 'Cause you're so different, in a way, 'cause the way you've been brought up.”

It is interesting to note, that even though she has moved to Toronto on her own, she continues to feel detached, on account of not being able to attend a local Gurdwara, since there is not one near or around campus.

Kaur 1 had also stated that she felt that she was a “3” even though she was a member of the Guru Gobin Singh Ji foundation and youth soccer team, where she was a leader. She further stated that the religion and culture does not play a big role in her life right now:

Umm, right now in my life, it doesn't have a very big importance. I don't know why. It doesn't play a big role right now. I mean, the teachings do, but not the actual practice of it. – Kaur 1

Conversely, Kaur 2 had felt that before joining the Guru Gobin Singh Ji foundation, she was a “1” and now she feels more connected to a “7.5”. She relates this to the fact that organization is heavily involved in helping other kids overseas and how she was inspired by other youth in the group to strengthen her own commitment.

...‘Cause I signed up with the Sikh organization at York, just put my name on the email server, I didn’t do anything myself, right? And I started talking to her [a friend] and she told me about what they do, they sponsor kids overseas, how they raise money, how they do annual runs- that’s fantastic! And they had meetings, and I went out for the meeting, you would not believe- I learned stuff like about Gurbani and our Gurus from 8 year olds, 10 year olds. – Kaur 2

Similar to Kaur 2 experiences, Singh 1 and Singh 2 attribute their continuous involvement with external organizations to being more connected with the religious and cultural community.

Gurdwaras- Pivotal and essential?

Throughout the dialogue I had created with the participants, the role of the Gurdwara’s in retaining language and religion was mentioned. Many, youth were considerably frustrated and disappointed with the lack of involvement and role that members of the Gurdwara committee had taken in educating their youth. As charity and donations are considerably important to maintaining and operating the Gurdwara’s, the Gurdwara’s are also responsible for up to millions of dollars that are donated throughout the year. Many youth felt that this money was not being used effectively, and could be allocated differently to accommodate many youth.

Singh 3 explains some of the frustration and disappointment, when he was asked how important he thought Gurdwara’s were in retaining language and religion.

I think the gurdwaras should be very important but they’ve let us down... So, a lot of them offer Punjabi classes, kirtan classes- which is very good, and I’m not knocking them for that. I’m just saying that they need to step up their role and they need to understand that the mentality that they have now, is that the sangat [congregation] needs the Gurdwara. But the mentality that they should have, is that they Gurdwara needs the sangat. They should cater to the community.

– Singh 3

While Kaur 4 attended language and religious classes as a child, she noted a marked difference in the quality and number of programs offered to today’s youth, which included her younger brother and sister. However, some youth noted that they were not aware of what was

available, since this information is not readily available and disseminated to them. Kaur 3 notes that she does not think the role of the Gurdwara's are adequate:

Umm- well there was that I disagree with, that go on in the gurdwara and the committee....I read, is a lot of financial things that have gone wrong in the Gurdwara committee. Everyone wants an upper hand, sort of thing. Nobody is really thinking of the youth, how to educate them, how to get them involved. With what Scarborough Gurdwara is doing is excellent, at the GGSCF, but then again I think there a group that is shunned in the corner. Their not- they haven't advertised enough. I think if they did in the Gurdwara, they'd get a much larger group. But, I don't think the Gurdwara is helping a lot- in terms of teaching our youth about Sikhism. And language, yeah, I mean they have Gurmukhi classes every now and then, I think they have a camp for that....Actually, I can't really say that, because I've never actually seen it. I haven't heard about, right? So, if I haven't heard about it, how many people are they actually reaching out to. Sort of thing, you know? But yeah, I really think they need to sort out their ways.

– Kaur 4

Kaur 4 describes that many of the organizations that are meant to accommodate and provide for the youth, are segregated and marginalized (excluded) from the rest of the Gurdwara.

Singh 2 also notes that much more support is needed to understand the basics of the religion and the faith:

Right now, I don't think they're important as they should be 'cause they're not doing the job that they're supposed to be doing. Gurdwaras are supposed to be a central place for them to congregate and come together and go as a community and be able to share as a community as a central living place for knowledge to be dispersed. However, that's not happening all that knowledge and learning is happening outside the Gurdwaras. They're not doing what they should be doing.- Singh 2

It should be noted, that since there are minimal language supports for the Punjabi language through the school structures, this learning is expected to occur outside of the normal school instruction and hours. This further marginalizes and trivializes the importance of retaining the Punjabi mother tongue, while school curriculum is based on Euro-Centric values, beliefs and observances. Chassels (2004) further describes multiculturalism within schools, as considerably watered down from its original intent as outlined in the Multiculturalism Act

(1988), and while there may be recognition of multiculturalism within the education system, it has been very minimal, and these minor changes are used to appease groups that question the 'norm'. Chassels (2004) refers to literature that cites multiculturalism in schools as "sari's, samosas, and steel bands"; that is when minorities question the dominant ideologies, their voices are silenced. Similarly, Dhruvarajan (2003) states that the curriculum needs to be more inclusive of other histories and cultures, to avoid marginalizing groups. Furthermore, children need to feel more integrated within the mainstream community, and parents to be encouraged to attend school activities.

Interest in Sikhism?

While the original intended purposes of this project were to see how Sikh youth constructed their identity, many youth described their interest in being different from everyone else and in some cases their responsibility in explaining to others about their difference. When Kaur 2 was asked how important her culture and religion was to her, she describes how she liked being "unique".

It is, it makes me unique and different. I'm not just Canadian, right? Like, I have the Indian part of me, which is unique. So, it is important to me.... We're distinct, we're different. I love being different. A lot of people might have issues with that, like I know a couple of Indian girls that don't like the Indianess. Like, they wouldn't wear any of the Indian stuff, even though it's in, but they refuse to wear it. But I would love to, 'cause I'm so proud of it. Like, I love it... not to say like our culture and religion is the best- it's just that, I just love the traditions that we have, lot of the culture is fun- the stuff that we have. You know our weddings?- that's the best, in the world. Like, I would never trade those weddings, for like any Gora [White] wedding, ever. – Kaur 2

While Kaur 2 implies that there are particular values attached to being Canadian, she further notes that she likes sharing her culture with her Gori (White) friends, and learning about their traditions.

It is important to note that there are distinct differences in what some of the literature suggests that, and what the youth who were interviewed in this study have stated. The literature suggests (James, 1999 & Dhruvarajan, 2003) that many youth acculturate because of an overwhelming pressure to “fit in”. Similar to Kaur 2’s experiences, Singh 3 had also stated how he enjoyed being unique: “I like the fact that I’m unique and that I stand out, and what not”. When he was later asked if he thought that he “fit in”, within his environment and school, he stated that he no longer felt the need to try anymore.

I try my hardest to find out where I fit in and then I realize that I’m not supposed to fit in, I’m supposed to do my own thing. Like, I don’t have that need to fit in, like I did before. If I wanted to fit to, I could fit ...but I don’t define myself based on other people. – Singh 3

Where many youth had suggested that they enjoy being different from other youth, through the mannerisms, clothes, and behaviours of many females, it appears that they are still heavily influenced by the Western culture. For example, many females who were interviewed choose to cut their hair, do their eyebrows and/or dress in clothing that is not traditional. Perhaps this is attributed to what is acceptable, in terms of norms for females, while the values and appearances to being a male, is not as stringent. In other words, due to peer and media influences, females may feel the need to be accepted amongst other females, while males do not necessarily long for approval.

Kaur 4 has also stated that she valued her distinguishing characteristics, when she was asked about the importance of her culture and religion.

Your culture, your background, your religion. I get those questions more often than I did in my first year. I feel more comfortable in my upper years at university. I feel comfortable enough that I go to school in my traditional dress. In my first year, I didn’t feel as comfortable. I just wanted to be like everyone else, but along with the upper years that I’ve also matured as well. I’ve realized what it is that makes me. So, I’m acceptable to myself as well as others...It’s very important [being Indian/Sikh-Canadian] to me because as I’ve matured, I’ve

realized that I don't want to be like everyone else. I'm different and being different makes me unique. We have traditional dance, we have traditional music, it makes me realize my culture. – Kaur 4

While it is difficult to establish a continuum of acceptable and unacceptable practices, behaviours and ways of dressing, there appears to be a hidden hierarchy of what is tolerated by Canadian mainstream society. Although all but Amritdhari (baptized) males and females have the option of “being like” everyone else, not all males can conceal their identity. Gobin (1999) argues parents discouraged their children not to take amrit (become baptized) until after they were educated, as it may hinder their academic achievements, since Amritdhari Sikhs are expected to put their religion before all else (p.288).

While many youth discussed not “fitting in” or being discriminated against in elementary school, many stated that they did not notice any discrimination at their university. Most youth attributed this to the maturity levels of university students, the multicultural environment and tolerant atmosphere. However, Kaur 5 who had grown up in a small Ontario town where she was the only Sikh, pointed out that she had experienced subtle forms of discrimination more so in high school, but individuals may keep their comments to themselves in larger environments and cities:

More so in high school 'cause here I think you can't really get away with it, if you were to say something to someone 'cause there's so many people of different ethnicities, that someone else is going to hear. You have to keep it to yourself. Where I grew up, it was a lot more open [racism]. So you know, it was one person. -Kaur 5

Apparently, “not being able to get away with it” has been noted as discouraging subtle forms of discrimination in larger environments. While Kaur 5 had been called “Osama's whore” in high school after the 9/11 attacks, she attributes this outward racism and discrimination to the lack of

understanding and “ignorance” of youth. Kaur 2, who has not directly experienced discrimination and racism, explains that this too may be attributed to ignorance:

...‘Cause I have friends who live in Gora towns, they’re really racist people. They don’t know even know what Punjabi is. They just think you’re Black, ‘cause you’re a different shade...They don’t even know your brown, you know? A lot of people are ignorant. – Kaur 2

Unlike the teenagers that were interviewed in other studies (Gobin, 1999 & Hall, 1995) the youth interviewed in this project enjoyed their individuality. This may be in part, due to maturity that is linked with the age of the participants. The Sikh Religious Society (1994) argues that problems of cultural conflict, are particularly prevalent amongst teenagers who are facing puberty and trying to find their own identity and “acceptance gained by conforming to certain norms of that society” (pp.312-313). There may also be a stronger influence to become more affiliated with the faith due to recent events such as 9/11 and the terrorist attacks in London England. These attacks have led more members of the community to make a distinction between Sikhs and those of an Islamic background, who wear similar headgear, which has been confused with a turban. While condemning these events, members of the community have held different vigils throughout North America for those who have been the victims of hate crimes after 9/11, while making the distinction between the Islamic headgear that is worn for cultural reasons, while Sikhs who wear turbans, do so for religious reasons. There is also a stronger and more visible growing Sikh population, within larger metropolis areas, and a visible political representation in Parliament by Sikh leaders, that may have lead to a greater awareness of Sikhs.

Many youth also noted that they were asked by peers or non-Sikhs about Sikhism, and find the faith interesting and walk away with a greater appreciation for the religion and it’s values. For instance, Singh 1 explains that he is the second Singh (visible Sikh with a turban and beard), ever to attend Ottawa University.

Although, we [are] like a really big minority [in Ottawa]. Like, I'm the second person- the second Singh ever in Ottawa Law School. So, a lot of people don't really know who we are. But, once you explain stuff to them, they're pretty open minded, I think that's a good thing about Canadians 'cause people are really open minded... when I went to Ottawa, a lot of people didn't know what Sikhs are. ...people in my class found out that I wear it [a kirpan] and they're just talking and they all respect it, like people are shocked they're like "no you don't wear one." But, then if you live like a good lifestyle, people respect it and then, you tell them the reason behind it, like it's alright but it's also 'cause I'm in like law school, people have a higher education, so people are more open-minded. Like, probably in like lower education people are like more closed- closed minded, but for me, it's been all right. And I think there's a lot of awareness. – Singh 1

Not only have participants found that there is an interest expressed from others to learn about Sikhism, but also how they have a responsibility to teach others about the lifestyle and teachings, as to avoid misconceptions and impede on biases that may exist. When Singh 4 was asked if he fit in at school, he discussed how he taught his classmates and teacher why he was different:

Umm, I took things differently when it came to school like when it was Guru Nanak Dev Ji's [the first Guru] birthday I brought doughnuts to school, and taught people who Guru Nanak was and why he was different...But I mean the education after six or seven years in the same school so pretty much everyone knew who I was and why I look so different. So, myself in school never really experienced hate. A lot of question, yes but my parents had prepared me for that.- Singh 4

Although an interest in the values and beliefs of Sikhism exists, this attention and curiosity must be interpreted carefully. Perhaps peers and outsiders interested in Sikhism are examining whether these practices are acceptable or unacceptable, or safe or unsafe, in comparison to their own values and lifestyles.

While not apparent in all five males that were interviewed, I have noticed through my involvement in the Gudwara, that there appears to be an increasing number of turbaned Sikhs that trim or shave their beard. Though this growing trend may also signify a need by males to want to accommodate Western influences as well.

These findings reflect the general prevalence of racism, as discussed in the introduction. The fact that these youth struggle with the issues discussed is a sign that they are subjected to pressures to conform to mainstream values and behaviours.

Parental Expectations and Values

Similar to many South Asian and Asian families, parental values and beliefs play a critical role in a young person's life. Youth were asked whether or not their parental values/expectations and beliefs conflicted with their own. Kaur 3 had stated that a few years ago, it would have, but she has come to accept her mother's beliefs. "Few years ago I would have said yes. But now, no". Other participants explained that one parent, many times the father, over the mother, was more tolerant and accepting than the other, while one parent explained the "ways" or lifestyle to the other parent. Communication, especially with one parent explaining "the ways" to another, was also noted as being a frequent response from the participants. For instance, Kaur 2 had explained that her father was more flexible and lenient, while her mother and her are both temperamental. Kaur 4 also explains that her personality sometimes conflicts with her mother, and that she more open with her father and grandmother.

While all youth had stated that they felt that they could talk freely and openly with their parents about most things, many had also stated that as they matured, they gained their parents' perspective, and realized where they were coming from. In other words, the youths' values were more align with their parents, as they grew older and learned more about their own culture and religion. For example, Kaur 3 stated that she did not use to listen to her mother, but had gradually come to learn about her values.

Cause I was a young teenager (laughs), back then in university and what not, you don't really listen to your parents, right? But, now, as I said, in the past year or so, I started to explore and venture into like our religion and so I sort of understand where they're coming from. – Kaur 3

Conversely, three of the male respondents Singh 2, Singh 3 and Singh 4, respectively, stated that parents' values and beliefs, both cultural and religious had been instilled at such an early age that, that in most cases, they were much in line with their own lifestyles. Singh 1, however noted that his parents had given him guidance, rather than enforcing strict rules:

...parenting style? I don't know, I never got hit, which is surprising to most people. (Laughs).

But-umm, my parents usually just talk to us, they're like "we can't tell you what to do, but it's our job to give you advice and it's better if you follow it...and that's all they do... like if I tell them something, I'm not going to get in trouble, like we can tell them anything and they are just going to give us advice- they won't talk down on us or think that we did something bad, So, it's pretty good- open communicating. – Singh 1

One female respondent was particularly distressed about lying to her parents, since her parents would not approve of her dating. The youth was asked how she managed and navigated between school, friends, family, religion and culture well, and how she keeps them in check.

I guess, it's REALLY, really hard. (Pause). It's like we're deceiving our parents, like that's the hardest thing for me, like we're deceiving our parents and we lie to them too well. Like, okay, with my ex-boyfriend, I would have to, he knows that I have to lie to my parents to go [out] with him, he would use that against me to call me a liar. You know what I'm trying to say? Like, that hurt. Like, that's crap. So, you have to build strategies. Umm, I don't know. I can't, it's just too much...- Kaur 2

Kaur 2 later started to cry during the interview, explaining that lying to her parents is difficult for her to do. Her experiences are similar to Dhruvarajan (2003) findings with Hindu youth and Gobin (1999) study of Sikh youth. Gobin (1999) explains the defiance and guilt associated with youth that have to lie to their parents, while the Sikh Religious Society (1994) refers to the "double-life" many teenagers lead.

Of the ten interviewees, only one talked about leading a double-life and how painful it was for her to lie to her parent about her socializing. Many other participants, however, noted

that they did not tell really discuss their whereabouts with their parents. Singh 3 noted that his parents are annoyed with him if he does not check in with them or does not tell them where he is going. Conversely, Kaur 4 had stated that if there is an outgoing that she knows her father will not approve of, she appeases to him for a year in advance:

...For example, my ski trip- was dead no. I started asking a year in advance because I know it was going to be a dead no, and then it turned into a maybe and then eventually a yes. So, if I work on them and I explain to them- As a child it was worse, there was a lot more "no's" in high school, than in university. They loosened up a little, they don't question so much what we're doing [now].

- Kaur 4

Similarly, Gobin (1999) found that a relatively small number of Sikh youth lied to their parents. When asked to discuss rebellion and defiance, many Sikh teenagers discussed "white lies" that they would use to stay behind after school, to socialize with their friends, since their parents would not approve of this. It is significant to note that females, not males had discussed lies that they had to tell their parents or how they had to get approval from their parents, regardless of their age, not the males. This points to the dichotomy between males and females, in which a female's image is still regarded as the family's honour (Gobin, 1999). Accordingly, since the Punjabi-Sikh community is so small and close-knit, social activities and the female's image is still viewed as being protected.

In contrast, when Singh 1 was asked about Canadian values, such as dating, he described some of the difficulties youth must face:

Singh 1: "Well, there's a lot of pressure to like adapt to what everyone else is doing, but you gotta at the end to decide for yourself and I don't really... find that appealing, whereas a lot of friends are caught up in all that *stuff*. So yeah."

Interviewer: "What other *stuff*?"

Singh 1: "Like, uhh chasing girls, going to clubs, like, trying to pick up girls at clubs, drinking like, hollering at girls, that type of stuff."

While, some youth discussed a pressure to conform, a couple of females had said that they had not tested their parents on things such as dating, while Kaur 2 noted that her parents would not allow her to, since they do not understand the logic behind dating.

Another interesting finding is that many youth had described that their parents had become accommodating- seemingly reluctantly and with hesitance over the years, in order to accommodate their children.

Interviewer: “Do your parental values/expectations/beliefs conflict with your own?”

Singh 1: “Not really, like I know a lot of people got conflicts with their parental expectations but my parents are pretty cool like that. Like they didn’t influence me to do what I didn’t want to do...”

Interviewer: “...so you’ve never had a problem with going out or...”

Singh 1: “Umm, when I first started going out, it was a problem about- they wanted me to come home early and stuff like that, but after a while they understood that’s how it is here. So, I was lucky that they understand, but I know a lot of people have to hide stuff, but luckily I didn’t have to go through that.”

It appears that parents unwillingly tolerate, though not fully accept, Western influences. This shows in the language that the youth used to describe how their parents had become more lenient over the years. Singh 1 said that this his parents realized that “this is how it is here”, in other words, it seems as though there is some reluctance to give way. Similar to Dhruvarajan (2003) arguments, it appears that there are core and peripheral values, where inflexibility is applied to the central beliefs, but parents become more accommodating where non-essential beliefs are concerned.

I was lucky like that, like my mom always took my side and she- and like my dad was like “no, you can’t go out.” Then my mom explained it to him, like if you put them on lockdown, they get older they do their own stuff, they’re not going to listen, so luckily my parents never really put any restrictions on me. – Singh 1

Many other youth describe how they “pushed” their curfews and boundaries, so that their parents would slowly give way.

Umm, I used to have a lot of restrictions back in high school. Regular curfew, 12 o'clock. Umm, what I never used to like. I used to try to get out of. But then, we [my brother and I] get home late, and we get yelled at, and we didn't do it again for a couple of weeks. For a while, I had a lot of restrictions, until I hit university. And up until my second year at university, I had restrictions. How often my parents would like for me to go out, or how late I should stay out, or how late they would like me to stay out. Umm, at times I followed what they said, at times I didn't. – Singh 2

Kaur 2 had also pointed out that she would get in trouble when she did not follow curfew, and would get “shittar” (getting slapped), if she wanted to go to the movies and came home late:

And I finally started going to movies, but I had to be home like 9 o'clock, right on the dot, or I'd get shittar, like big time. And then slowly, slowly I realized that they weren't budging from 9 o'clock. (Giggles). So, I'd push for the curfew, get into sh- into trouble. So, that was my thing, I'd push further and further. So, I didn't really have a curfew. Like, you know what I'm trying to say? I know it's bad. Because that's the whole thing, I had to always set own rules for myself.-
Kaur 2

Kaur 2, like other participants, said they had to continuously push the boundaries, despite the consequences, to allow for more freedom and flexibility. Whereas some youth said that parents usually set boundaries based on the youth's maturity, perhaps more parents have succumbed and given up a struggle against Western pressures and influences. Such influences include going out or clubbing, which are seen as inappropriate, regardless of the actual activities that have taken place.

In summary, there seems to be some degree of intergenerational conflict, regarding Sikh and Western values. While the youth push the boundaries and parents accommodate them to some degree, it also seems that the youth set a number of boundaries for themselves. In order to be more “out-going” and participate in various social activities, many youth have adapted strategies and must negotiate a fine balance of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Gender Differences

Educational gender expectations were not as pronounced as the current literature suggests. In fact, none of the respondents had said that there were any differences between themselves and a sibling of the opposite sex, in terms of expectations towards academics. However, some youth noted that while gender differences did not occur in their family, this difference may be prevalent amongst other Punjabi-Sikh families, as witnessed through extended family members.

I don't have any sisters, but I know from experience that there is different stuff expected from a son than from a daughter. Like people view the daughter as the pride of the family. She can't really go out late, she can't really do a lot of stuff that a guy can do. And like, she's expected to help out at home- help around the kitchen, whereas the guy doesn't have as many responsibilities. – Singh 1

While some participants stated that many parents had higher expectations and demands for their daughters as opposed to their sons, they had not experienced this first hand.

Accordingly, while unequal expectations may occur in terms of educational achievements, the youth specifically interviewed, did not experience this gender inequality. Singh 2 attributes the inequality to the level of education that the parents have, and their own upbringing:

Depends on the family set-up and depends on how educated your parents are too. I find that the more education that the parents have, the more inclined they are to push sons and daughters to exceed in school, no matter what gender they are. If the parents aren't as educated, as others, they tend to only push the sons, as opposed to the daughters, 'cause that's what they been brought up to.

In other words, the parents own experiences and expectations are connected to their own rearing and education, and their values will reflect this ideology.

While not all youths experienced gender inequality first hand in their immediate family, they had heard about it, or seen it from extended family members. As youth were asked if pressures for Punjabi females differed from that of Punjabi males, they had made a reference to another member of the family. For instance, since Kaur 3 only has one older sister, she stated that she had not experienced any differences, while she noted that her cousins had preferential treatment, and everything a male did was not reflective of the family:

“...There is a difference, it’s visible, and still goes on.”

Interviewer: “And how do you feel about that?”

Kaur 3: “How do I feel about that?! (said in high-pitch tone). (Sighs). Umm, most of the time, I get shittar for debating it, at home. But, I’m not the type to just sit there and say “yeah, okay.” I’ve already told my mom and argued several times, that if I were to have a girl, I’d be more than happy. I know me, and I know how I’ve developed and how far I’ve come and there’s absolutely nothing wrong with me. Right? In comparison to a boy. As far as I think- I’m way better than the boys in my family right now.” – Kaur 3

School Influence and Racism

While the current literature (Dhruvarajan, 2003; Bhachu, 1985a; & Bariana, 1997) implies that there are different expectations for male and females in school, I did not find evidence of this. However, one participant stated there was a perception that males are expected to be higher achieves, as there is a still a prevalent notion that males are the breadwinners, while females should still be relegated to the domestic realm.

Yeah, I think the guys are expected to study more, ‘cause it’s looked on as if they’re the ones who are going to be supporting the family, and the girl is just going to be married off and look- take care of the kids. I think there’s more pressure on the guys to do better in school. – Singh 1.

While both genders were expected to do equally well as the next, Singh 2 also noted that higher expectations for males, in terms of education, may stem from the parents’ own values and expectations. Singh 2 further argues that if the parents are not as educated, they will expect males to do better, as they not believe females need to be as educated.

It also appears that there continues to be a heavy influence on education for Punjabi-Sikhs, stemming from their parental influences. Similar to many other immigrant families, children are expected to do exceptionally well, as this will lead to increased social mobility. Youth stated that education is more important to them academically than socially, as there is limited time for a social and extra-curricular activities. When participants were asked what motivated them to complete school, they suggested that it would lead to a “better life”.

Education is important, like you need education to live a comfortable life. Like, if you don't have an education, you're going to be working, like seven days a week, like 9 to 5 jobs. If you have an education, you can have more freedom to live a life you want to live. – Singh 1

For Singh 1, living “the life that he wanted” was also the reason for choosing a university education, as opposed to entering college. Many youth had stated that there continues to be a pre-convinced notion, from peers, the community and school staff that a university education is much more highly regarded, than a college education. Furthermore, the Punjabi culture places a high value on status and economic success.

Accordingly, Gobin (1999) also suggests that through the Sikh culture, Sikh parents and the community regard academic achievements highly, especially university credentials (p.265). Furthermore, Gobin (1999) suggests that Sikh community places a strong pressure to achieve well, as failing or doing poorly is looked upon as dishonoring the family.

Youth were also asked, about whether they had thought that they could overcome racism or racist notions through their academic achievements. The answers varied, yet many had felt that they could overcome stereotypes and preconceived notions through their achievements.

Some people in my law school, they were saying that a lot of firms are trying to like, push minorities into the firms, 'cause like they're not very diverse, they only have one set of ideas. So, a lot of people are saying that being different right now, might actually work to my advantage. So that's a good thing, but maybe in the

past, it might have been a problem, but now I think a lot of people are opening up to people with different views and backgrounds. – Singh 1

Further to these beliefs, some participants believed that education was empowering and allowed for other individuals to become more open-minded and receiving of diversity and differences.

...but it's also 'cause I'm in like law school, people have a higher education, so people are more open-minded. Like, probably in like lower education people are like more closed- closed minded, but for me, it's been all right. And I think there's a lot of awareness. – Singh 1

Singh 1 implies, as with many participants, that university education with a higher level of is acceptance of ethnic and racial minorities.

Summary/Discussion

While the research conducted may not be applicable to all Punjabi-Sikh youth throughout Ontario, my research conducted on the ten participants throughout Ontario are indicative of trends and patterns. The results of the study need to be interpreted with consideration of (1) the context of racism in Canadian society; and (2) the internal practices and pressures in the Sikh-Punjabi community.

Racism was evident through the responses that were given by the participants. This included why they did not want to be identified as “Canadian”, their education and how they attributed overcoming racism and racist notions through their academic achievements. The interviews indicate, that while many of the participants were born in Canada, none of these youth identified themselves as exclusively being Canadian. As one participant, Kaur 5, pointed out, whenever she felt like she belonged, she was reminded by her peers that she was not Canadian, did not belong, but was different. These differences were noted through the way her classmates used racist and derogatory comments about her ethnicity and religious affiliation, which further

isolated her. Consequently, because of her experiences, she still feels that she does not “fit in”, even amongst her community and within the Sikh faith.

While Punjabi-Sikh youth did not use “Canadian” to identify themselves, they described the various layers that made up their identity, which included their nationality, citizenship, religion, culture, ancestral roots, ethnicity, and/or their skin colour. Some youth had commented that being Canadian was attributed to their geographic location, rather than the beliefs and values they held. Some youth also noted that being Canadian was attributed to particular values, to which they did not want to be associated with. For instance, one youth described high divorce rates, and promiscuity as “Canadian”, and could not identify with that. Furthermore, while they could not describe why they shed particular values, youth further did not acknowledge which Western values they had adapted. Instead, it appears that youth are constantly influenced by their peers and outside influences, and adapt principles and parts of the lifestyle that allows them to easily assimilate. Accordingly, Punjabi-Sikh youth’s identity is very much fluid, and dependent on various factors.

In terms of Sikh youth and identity, my study reveals that much more must be learned about how and why Punjabi-Sikh youth perceive themselves, and the various layers and influences. Two youth had discussed the recent terrorist attacks, and their shock, yet whether this impedes and hinders their identity, or allows them to want to become more connected and affiliated to their faith, is another area that needs to be examined. Many Sikhs, including those in London, have been the victims of hate crimes, as Sikhs are mistaken for individuals belonging to the Islamic faith. This distinction is another area that also needs to be made clear.

Through the analysis, it was also noted that there is an interest, or perhaps renewed attention or concerns about the Sikh faith, and the values, customs, observances, and religious

symbols, associated with Sikhism. It is not clear, however, whether individuals question Sikhism to have a greater understanding or awareness of its foundation, or whether they inquire about the faith, in comparison to their own lifestyle and deem it acceptable or unacceptable.

Youth also had expectations of themselves, in terms of education. All ten participants that were interviewed were attending or had attended post-secondary education through a university. This may stem from their immigrant parents beliefs and values that higher education will lead to increased social mobility. Furthermore, many immigrant parents may not have had their credentials recognized from abroad and were relegated to lower paying, lower skilled sectors, such as the manufacturing and industrial industry. The parents experiences may also indicate the importance placed on education. Similarly, to my findings, Gobin's (1999) study on Sikh and racialized youth in Toronto, notes that Sikh youth have higher educational aspirations and achievements than other racialized youth. Gobin (1999) also attributes the high academic performance of Punjabi-Sikh youth, to their immigrant parent's hard work ethic.

Many youth also described that they felt that they could overcome racism and/or racist notions through their academic achievement, regardless of their appearances. Attributing ignorance and ignorant people as continually perpetuating hate and misconceptions, not all youth felt that racism could be overcome. Yet, many youth still believed that their university education and credentials would afford them better opportunities.

There are also many policy implications to this study. It appears that the school curriculum and the Multiculturalism Act have not gone far enough to create a greater understanding of diversity and acceptance. The current Multiculturalism Act is seen as a form of tokenism that has done the bare minimum to address the large influx of immigrants, and the

changing racial and religious make-up of Canada. Accordingly, many more inclusive programs and funding is required for minority groups, to allow for the retention of the Punjabi language.

The internal practices and pressures in the Sikh-Punjabi community must also be described here. Through the interviews with Sikh youth, it appears that there continues to be confusion between the Punjabi culture and the Sikh religion, which may have further complicated the identity of these youth. While it was not the originally intended purpose of my study to determine the distinction between culture and religion, it appears that many of the youth that were interviewed, similarly to the Punjabi-Sikh community, could not differentiate between cultural expectations and religious values. The Punjabi culture and Sikh religion has been too intertwined with one another, that many Sikhs, who cannot make the distinction between the two, have gravely misunderstood Sikhism as being part of the Punjabi culture. I too have misinterpreted Sikh values and the Punjabi culture, yet it is only through the course of my research that I have uncovered this confusion. Accordingly, this distinction must be made by families and the community, to avoid further relegating women to the margins, and preventing other misconceptions to perpetuate.

Perhaps this confusion has further complicated Sikh youth's identity, since the distinction and blurring of both the culture and religion, has led many females and males to assimilate with parts of the Western culture, while retaining parts of their own cultural and ethnic background. While many youth interviewed discussed how they unconsciously shed particular values, beliefs and customs, it was not determined what factors contribute to a youth's identity, and why he or she chooses the traits and values they do. In other words, there appears to be many contributing factors in which youth assimilate and accommodate, however they did not point it out or recognize it.

Punjabi-Sikh youth also noted the current role of the Gudwaras and their disappointment in the programs and services offered. While youth described that there were programs and services available to them, they also noted that they did not know about what was offered, or felt that the group that they belonged to, was shunned by the Gudwara. Youth also described the lack of connection Gudwara committees had to children and youth. Some youth argued that the funds collected by the Gudwaras were being misused, and not allocated appropriately. This made some participants feel as though the Gudwara committee could not relate to them and their experiences, which further segregated their involvement.

In terms of parental expectations, many youth believed that parental values did not contradict or conflict with their own beliefs, and could understand where their parents were coming from. Some youth described dating as being taboo, while one youth explained that her parents disapproved of dating because of teenage pregnancies, and the promiscuity surrounding it. However, there also appears to be intergenerational conflict between parents and youth, as some youth, particularly females, described how they had to lie to their parents about what they were doing and who they were with, as they would otherwise, not approve of it.

The implications for this study also mean a great deal to the community, since youth appear to be marginalized and segregated from any involvement in the Gudwaras. Consequently, as Kaur 2 and Kaur 3 have noted, their parents silence their voices, as females and youth, discussed inequality or differences. There appears to be a growing need to accommodate youth to learn more about their roots, religion and the language, since the public sector, such as schools, has further immobilized Punjabi-Sikh from learning about their history through the curriculum. Accordingly, since there is little hope of incorporating and integrating diversity

through the curriculum and into the mainstream institutions, it is the role of the community and the Gudwara committees to educate children and youth.

For future studies conducted on Sikh youth, it may be interesting to examine the experiences of Punjabi-Sikh youth who are not affiliated with religious organizations or groups. This may reveal many differences in parental expectations, issues of identity, “fitting in” and gender differences. It may also be helpful to interview turbaned youth who cut or have trimmed their beards, and their motivation and reasons behind this. Youth who trim their beards may do so to reduce their differences within the mainstream culture. Another area that would be useful to examine, is males who are not visible Sikhs, and their reasons for not retaining or upholding any religious identifiers.

Other areas that could be further examined include the gender perspective. While inequality was noted, it would be helpful to examine the breath and depth of this phenomenon. While three of the five females had noted a frustration and disparity between the preferential treatment that their brothers or cousins received, it would be helpful to examine the impact this has on females, and where these difference stems from. Furthermore, it would be helpful to further examine intergenerational conflict, as these issues are not readily discusses with Punjabi-Sikh families and the community.

Limitations of the study

While this project attempts to be as rich as possible through the available sources, there were significant limitations. One of these was the sample size and population. Since all of the participants were involved in some way or another with a religious organization, institution and/or group through the community or their university, this may have lead to a sample that is not representative of many Sikh youth. Off the record, one participant had told the researcher

that to recruit individuals that may have “conflicts” with their parents, the researcher should go to bars and clubs and interview Sikh youth who attended such establishments. Another limitation to the research was the implied conflict that parents and youth may have. To ensure that there is no implication of an implied conflict, the researcher could have used a more neutral word, such as “contrasting values” or “do your values differ from your parents?”

Furthermore, like many immigrant families, the Punjabi-Sikh community is a tight-knit group with strong community and religious ties. Accordingly, through religious or community ties, youth involved in organizations are well-known by many, if not all members of the community. Consequently, while being an “insider” may be as beneficial as a researcher, in some respects, it has many pitfalls. One such limitation is a hesitance and resistance to answer all questions truthfully. Accordingly, many participants may have censored their responses, without the researcher’s knowledge. Another limitation is allowing for the researchers own assumptions, experiences and attitudes to come through, the questions that may be asked and presumptions made. While not intentional, it may also be possible that preconceptions may creep through the way questions are worded, allowing for the interviewers’ opinions to affect the results. In addition, audio recording may also lead to participants being conscious of being recorded, as they may censor themselves.

Another limitation was the use of the narrative and qualitative interview approach. While “going off” on a tangent is encouraged through the qualitative approach, it creates a lot of data. Furthermore, transcribing is very time consuming and makes it difficult to sort through emerging themes.

There were several limitations to the methodology. One such limitation is that recalling or reconstructing events and ideas that may have not happened within the last couple of months,

may allow for biases or an incorrect interpretation of what had actually happened. For instance, participants were asked why they choose university over college education. While one participant was entering university in the fall and seemingly decided within the last year, other participants would have had to think about four or five years back, to describe the events that lead to this. While there is no way the interviewer can control this limitation, it is an unfortunate aspect of the qualitative research.

Due to the limited interaction with the participants, the researcher was not able to build a mutual rapport with all the interviewees. Accordingly, there was a marked hesitation from at least four participants, Singh 1, Singh 2, Kaur 3, and Kaur 5 respectively, who actively gazed at the recording device throughout the interview, and made comments like “tell me when it’s on”. Furthermore, Kaur 3 had teased and asked whether the recorded had to be visible and further cross-referenced to ensure that what she would remain confidential, when recalling her own experiences. To what extent and whether or not the recording device impeded the participants’ answers, cannot be measured or assessed, but it gives an indication of the participants state of mind. Time constraints did not allow for the building a non-hierarchical, and reciprocal relationship with all the participants. Accordingly, some participants felt uncomfortable or at unease as evident through their body language or short answers. While a shorter interview is not necessarily an indication of an inferior interview (Bryman, 2001), Kaur 1 was hesitant and anxious throughout the interview, while the entire interview lasted 17 minutes. In hindsight, perhaps the interviewer should have asked her whether she wanted to continue on, and whether she was comfortable. Kaur 2, on the other hand, was extremely comfortable and occasionally swore, while her interview was 69 minutes.

The gender of the researcher was another determinate of the research. One youth was not aware that the researcher was a female and was initially surprised and possibly at unease with being interviewed by a female interviewer. Since communication was established via email and since Punjabi-Sikh names are often interchangeable for both genders, and the male participant was shocked that the researcher had approached him and knew his name. Consequently, this may have affected his comfort level and responses. Another barrier was, due to re-construction of the Scarborough Gurdwara, there was limited space in which to conduct the interviews that occurred in the faculty. As a result, there were instances where interviews were interrupted by background noises and kirtans going on in other areas of the Gurdwara. The limited availability of both the participants and the researcher was also a barrier to access. Therefore, many interviews were conducted at late or early hours throughout the month of July.

To control some of the limitations, another researcher may be able to build a more sustainable and long-term relationship with all such participants. In other words, if participants were recruited up to six months in advance, they may have felt more at ease with the researcher and built a trusting relationship. Accordingly, youth may have been more comfortable and recall other experiences through a long-term friendship with the researcher. To limit background noises and other distractions, future studies could have been conducted in a less distracting room, within the existing gurdwara, and booked ahead of time.

'Appendix 'A' Definitions and Terms

For the purposes of this study, several concepts will be defined to better understand the complexity of identity and the multiple layers of oppression that may hinder integration and inclusion.

Acculturation as defined by Sodowsky et al (1991), as cited in James (1999) is the “response of minority groups and immigrants to overt or systemic pressures from the dominant group to adapt, conform or adjust to dominant values, customs, behaviours and psychological characteristics” (p.198). Difference in acculturation rates can magnify conflict and cause increased alienation between youth and families as children take a year to integrate, while their parents can take three years or more to acculturate (Biswas, as cited, in Kunz & Hanvey, 2000). Dhruvarajan (2003) however, states that acculturation “implies the idea of encouraging cultural diversity, but within the context of a strong commitment to national goals and institutions, thus expressing the idea of belonging to two cultures at the same time” (p.4).

Through the process of acculturation, whereby individuals incorporate elements of the dominant ethnic group, *assimilation* implies that many racialized ethnic or racial subculture is given up for the sake of fitting in (James, 1999, p.198).

Culture as defined by Fleras & Elliot (1992) is an “abstraction derived from the corpus of shared meanings (beliefs, values, and symbols) that accounts for patterns of interpersonal/intergroup behaviour within a specific community” (p.314). Fleras & Elliot (1992) further explain that culture is crucial to the “adaptation and survival of the community, in large part because of the rules and codes (“blueprint”) by which individuals define, plan, assess, and jointly link appropriate lines of behaviour” (p.314).

Fleras & Elliot (1992) define *ethnicity* as an “organizing principle where individuals sort themselves into “groups” and claim entitlement to certain resources by virtue of a shared commitment to select aspects of their cultural past” (p.49). which include a shared “common language, culture and identity” (p.315).

Ethnic identity is another multifaceted layer needed to understand how Punjabi-Sikh youth identify themselves. Nayar (2004) argues that the majority group defines ethnic identity, rather than how the groups themselves may characterize their ethnic identity. Since identity is a socially constructed term, that differs for each ethnic group and is constructed by the majority group, and deeply rooted in euro-centric values this study will attempt to unpack the competing messages of identity from a Punjabi and Sikh perspective and Western, euro-centric stance. The aforementioned descriptions of identity have been used as a starting point to which to begin an analysis.

Identity is a vague, ambiguous, socially constructed, fluid concept that is constructed by multiple, complex layers. Nayar (2004) defines identity as an association with a “particular group, ideology, religion, social role, or career” (p.13) that reflects mainstream identity, and differs from how identity is constructed by traditional cultures. Indeed, in “traditional society, one’s identity is ordinarily ‘collective,’ largely dependent on one’s familial relations... and central dimensions of one’s identity is the family (or clan), within which roles diffuse, status is ascriptive, and there is a collectivity orientation” (Nayar, 2004, p.14).

Institutional racism is another key component in understanding barriers that exist to prevent less than full integration. Also referred to as systemic racism, James (1999) states that institutional racism exists “where the established policies, rules, and regulations of an organization or institution systemically reflect and produce differential treatment of various

groups within that organization or institution and in society generally. These regulation are used to maintain social control and the status quo in favour of the dominant group” (p.135).

Religious identity is another important component in understanding the constraints that Sikhism may place on an individual’s identity. Religious identity may be defined as “rooted in tradition whereby the emphasis is on community and its role in social control” (Nayar, 2004, p.14)

Othering, as defined by Carty (1999) may be referred to as a historical process, in which one groups has been excluded based on a “system of stratification based on skin colour” (pp.36-37).

Social capital, for the purposes of this paper, will be defined as “cohesive and supportive family relations and norms and values which encourage academic achievement” (Gobin, 1999, ii).

Social mobility will be used to refer to Gobin’s (1999) definition of increased economic success, attributed to a high level of education and educational aspirations.

Structural racism as defined by James (1999) is also referred to as cultural racism, whereby the “rooted inequalities of society operate to justify the allocation of racial groups to particular categories and class sites. It explains how the ideas of inferiority and superiority, based on socially selected physical characteristics, and which are found in society’s norms and values, operate to exclude racial minority group members from accessing and participating in major social and cultural institutions” (p.135).

For the purposes of this paper first, second, and third generation Sikhs will need to be defined as their perceptions, levels of acculturation, immigration status, education, and levels types of

socialization differ immensely and have a large role in identity and perspectives on issues and values differ immensely.

Nayar (2004) defines *first generation* Sikhs as grandparents or great-grandparents, who are fifty-six or older, and who have spent their formative years in India, immigrating to Canada as adults. *Second-generation* consists of adults from the age of thirty-one to fifty-five that, and vary from the country to which they had originally immigrated from (e.g. Britain or East Africa), but had immigrated to Canada as adults in their late teens or early twenties (Nayar, 2004). Nayar (2004) further defines third-generation Sikhs who range from ages eighteen to thirty, having spent their formal schooling years in Canada and who are either studying or in pursuit of careers (p.22).

Youth is yet another socially constructed and fluid term, that varies in perception and interpretation (Tyyskä, 2001). For the purposes of this paper, youth will be defined as young adults between the ages of 18 to 25, as obtaining both parental and individual consent is a time consuming process.

Appendix 'B'
Interview Protocol

These are open-ended questions and the interviewer will probe and follow up on any themes or ideas that emerge from each question.

Background Information

- 1) How old are you? _____
- 2) Male or Female
- 3) Which city do you reside in? _____

Questions about culture & religion

- 4) What do you think the central cultural and religious values are of the Sikh community? How do you view the Sikh religious and cultural community?
- 5) How important is your culture and religion to you?
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 10, how connected do you feel to other Sikhs and the community? (1 representing not connected and 10 really connected). Explain your answer.
- 7) How involved are you in community and religious celebrations?
- 8) Do you follow the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scriptures) or the kirtans, paath, and ceremonies (sermons)? Explain.

Questions pertaining to parental influence

- 9) Do your parental values/expectations/beliefs conflict with your own? Can you provide some examples? Probe for detail and follow-up on any theme or idea that emerges.
- 10) Could you tell me a little about your parents' style of parenting? For instance, tell me when you're expected to be home, what are some of the restrictions you have? Do you and your parent(s) get along well? For instance, can you talk freely and openly about anything with them?
- 11) Do you think that parents are most often right? If not when do you think that they are wrong? Ask for examples and explanations.
- 12) Have you ever disobeyed your parents? If yes, when and for what reason? Do you make most of your decisions on your own or do you consult with your parents first?
- 13) At home, how, if any, are pressures for Punjabi females different from Punjabi males?

Questions pertaining to school influence

- 14) How important is school for you? Academically and socially?
- 15) What motivates you to complete school? Why did you go on to college or university?
- 16) How do you feel that you fit in at school, in relation to others?
- 17) Do you think it's harder for Punjabi/Sikh girls than for boys to "fit in"? In what respects?

- 18) Are there different pressures at school for both females and males?
- 19) How have you adjusted to school?
- 20) Do you think Punjabi values are different from school values? How does this relate to you and how you identify yourself?
- 21) Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your skin colour, religion, culture, or ethnicity at school? Please provide details of when and how.

Additional Questions

Is there anything you would like to say or add that is personally meaningful or an area that I may have neglected that should be considered in my research?

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