

Running head: INDO-CANADIAN MALES AND HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Case Study:

A study of a selected group of Indo-Canadian males and their experiences at high school

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Abstract

This qualitative case study describes and analyzes the educational identities of second generation Indo-Canadian high school males in British Columbia. I draw from post-traditionalist sociology for my theoretical framework. I conducted face-to-face individual interviews to develop a collective and individual understanding of the perceptions of seven Indo-Canadian teenage males from four cities in British Columbia. Results indicate that their educational and personal identities are constructed more in relation to their daily social interactions and less in relation to traditional Punjabi cultural norms. Results from the student interviews reveal that they negotiate their identities in relation to social interactions that are always shifting. A pattern emerged whereby the participants are constantly trying to find a sense of self and belonging as they discuss how they identify themselves and their place in relation to school, family, culture, and peer groups. This study has implications for educators and for second generation identity studies. Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity creates a need for educators to encourage and embrace the involvement of parents from the often reluctant Punjabi community. Understanding and recognizing the different ways these youth develop their identities may enable educators and identity researchers to confront the growing academic underachievement of Indo-Canadian high school male youths.

Résumé

Cette étude de cas de nature qualitative décrit et analyse l'identité scolaire d'élèves masculins Indo-Canadiens de deuxième génération fréquentant l'école secondaire. Le cadre théorique de cette étude repose sur la sociologie post-traditionnelle. Des entrevues individuelles ont été menées afin de développer une compréhension collective et individuelle de la perception de sept adolescents masculins d'origine Indo-Canadienne provenant de quatre villes de Colombie-Britannique. Les résultats indiquent que leur identité scolaire et personnelle se construit davantage en fonction de leurs interactions sociales quotidiennes plutôt que selon les normes culturelles Punjabi. Les données d'entrevues révèlent que ces élèves négocient leur identité en lien avec des interactions sociales toujours changeantes. Les résultats suggèrent l'émergence d'un mode selon lequel les participants tentent constamment de trouver un sens de soi et un sentiment d'appartenance en lien avec la façon dont ils s'identifient et à la place qu'ils occupent dans leurs écoles, leurs familles, leur culture et leurs groupes de pairs. Cette étude a des implications pour les agents d'éducation ainsi que pour les études concernant le développement de l'identité d'immigrants de deuxième génération. Une plus grande diversité ethnique et culturelle requiert des agents d'éducation qu'ils encouragent et acceptent l'implication des parents, souvent réticents, de la communauté Punjabi. Comprendre et reconnaître les différentes façons qu'ont ces jeunes de développer leur identité peut permettre aux agents d'éducation et aux chercheurs dans le domaine de l'identité de contrer l'augmentation de l'échec scolaire chez les élèves Indo-Canadiens masculins de niveau secondaire.

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Prologue

In this prologue, I discuss my experiences as a second generation Indo-Canadian from British Columbia, and how those experiences have contributed to the undertaking of this research thesis.

Family History and Education of Parents

I am the son of East Indian immigrants from Punjab, India. Both my parents were born in the Punjab, and my siblings and I were born in British Columbia (B.C.), Canada. My family's Canadian roots go back nearly six decades to when my grandfather came to British Columbia in 1952. My grandmother and her four children, including my nine year old father, arrived in Canada in 1963. My grandfather settled in Mission, B.C., which was at that time, and still remains, a small, steadily growing community in the Fraser Valley region. The Fraser Valley is situated on the south-west tip of the Canadian mainland, and Mission is situated a few miles from the Canadian-United States border. Mission is one of the cities that comprise the Metro Vancouver area of B.C, which refers to the cities and suburbs adjoining Vancouver.

My parents still live in Mission, but some of my father's siblings and their families have moved to other lower mainland cities. By the time my father arrived in Canada, his own father was noticeably fatigued from years of intensive physical labour. During those first 10 years alone in Canada, my grandfather's apprehension increased. Compounded by the stresses of work life and integration into a new culture, he often anxiously awaited the slow stream of mail and messages from family in India. He was constantly concerned for the physical and financial well-being of his distant family. Each

new day posed unforeseen problems, as he sought his life's path without a guide to provide him solace. The first few decades of our family's experience in Canada is a story of difficult times. Economically strained and culturally removed from a familiar way of life, our family's daily survival was an arduous and humbling task.

With the exception of my eldest aunt, my father and his remaining two siblings were enrolled in public school. My oldest aunt did not attend school because the family's livelihood and well-being demanded that she work instead. Education was considered a luxury, whereas work was a necessity. As a young boy, my father spent his weekends and summers working alongside his parents and siblings in the local agricultural fields.

In one sense, my grandparents placed a high value on education. They valued the necessity of an education, and the importance of learning the language and customs of an unfamiliar culture. They sent most of their children to school to learn to read and write, become familiar with their new world, and to develop the skills and tools crucial for survival in an unfamiliar culture. They hoped that school would alleviate some of the obstacles that made my grandfather's first decade in Canada so difficult. For example, my grandfather's poor English communication skills forced him to rely on inconsistent interpreters or just his sheer instinct when communicating with service people and in other daily interactions. When filling out any type of bureaucratic forms, he had to trust in the sincerity of the contract provider, especially when a reliable translator was unavailable. I can only imagine the difficulty he must have experienced when seeking medical advice for his aches and pains; he could only explain by physically pointing.

The most significant and potentially dangerous aspect of my grandfather's inability to communicate in English was work related, especially when he had difficulty

understanding directions that informed him of changes at the job site. His uncertainty was a dangerous daily predicament in his work in the lumber industry with machines that could instantaneously injure or kill.

My grandparents assessed the value of education for their children through a lens of their most pressing priorities and needs. With this in mind, they precluded their children from continuing their education into the higher grades. At this stage of their Canadian migration experience, they could not afford to support their children going further in school because the family needed the children's income to maintain the basic needs of the household. Considering the potential lost income when children attended school rather than worked, school was expensive, even free public school. Only established immigrant families could afford to send their children to school through high school graduation or beyond.

My grandparents may have undervalued education because the Indo-Canadian community of the 1950s and 1960s lacked educated East Indian role models. Few, if any, East Indians could be pointed to who illustrated the value of an expensive education and its future benefits. From within the Indo-Canadian community, the greatest stories of success were those of businesspersons and entrepreneurs. Some hard working men from the manufacturing sector had transformed themselves from day labourers into titans of industry.

East Indian role models are not restricted to the immigrant community alone, since conceivably, they could come from any sector, from any Canadian group. Without a common language, and lacking exposure to different groups, my grandparents never formed bonds or appreciation for the significant persons of other racial backgrounds

including the majority population. Conversely, my father and his siblings were exposed to educated role models. Their first exposure to occupations that were different from those of their parents was teachers, both male and female. As my father and his siblings acquired the English language, their exposure to dominant society continued to grow through their experience with books, magazines, personal daily interactions with others, radio and television.

My grandparents were overwhelmed by their new world, by the onerous reality of living expenses beyond their income. In their reality, bills and mouths to feed outweighed the education of their children beyond the basic requirements of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Over time, my grandparents found it increasingly difficult to justify sending their children to school. Almost as soon as my father began his education, it ended. In descending order, my grandparents withdrew my uncle, my aunt, and then my father from school. Until his younger brother was born in Canada in 1964, my father was the youngest of four siblings.

My father began his education in Canada in the fifth grade. He recalls being an overall excellent student who never struggled or failed any particular course. From the beginning until the end of his short tenure, he always was excited to attend school. Despite the culture shock and other huge adjustments, he enjoyed the competitive nature of school, and internalized his success on his report cards as a competitive measuring stick. By using this grading system, he compared his intelligence to that of his classmates, and thus measured his degree of assimilation and place in Canadian society. He admired his success as a superior math student—an unquestionable reality considering his ability for doing complicated calculations in his head. Only a few years

later, my grandparents permanently withdrew father from high school before my father could graduate.

On November 7, 1971, my mother arrived in Canada, and shortly thereafter on November 27th she married my father. Within a year, they owned a home and supported my grandparents who had moved in with them. Before immigrating to Canada, my mother completed high school in Punjab, India. Although some of her instruction was in English, the significant portion of her studies were in Punjabi, our mother tongue, or Hindi, the predominant language of India. She never attended school in Canada.

My mother was the first in her family to immigrate to Canada. Somewhat of a pioneer, this nineteen year old woman from a very protective, coddling family moved to a new country. Within a few short years, she successfully sponsored the immigration applications of her mother and siblings. My mother's "nanka" family was not as influential in my upbringing as my father's "dadka" family because Punjabi culture is predominately a patriarchal culture. Although both sides of my family have become strong supporters of higher education, my earliest educational influences and experiences were formed through my association with the Sidhu family.

My parents are still passionate about education, believing that it is imperative to the well-being of their children. Since our childhood, they have instilled in us their passion for study. I have come to understand that they value education for a number of reasons. First, they value the responsibility associated with "white collar" jobs. Second, they know and highly regard the educated citizens within their broader Canadian community as well as the Indo-Canadian community. Additionally, they have experienced working difficult, often dirty jobs for minimum pay and little appreciation.

For example, they operated a hands-on raspberry farm for many years, which was a difficult job that occupied much of their time, physical energy, and financial resources. Thus, they believe that a good education is a guarantee of a life free from similarly difficult occupations.

Parental Involvement in my Education

I was socialized to believe that education was the only known prerequisite for success; other methods for building a successful life were uncertain and unpredictable; and education could alleviate insecurity and ensure a lifelong career. My parents believed that a career achieved through education would presumably remain free of uncertainty. They believed that specialized professions remained exempt from the influences of negative economic conditions that could affect occupations heavily dependent on physical labour. Labour-intensive occupations, such as those performed by my parents, suffered from layoffs, downsizing, and other volatile market conditions.

Since my parents had little formal English education, they were ill prepared to guide and manage their children's paths through the educational system. For example, they could not help us with our homework, an essential role for parents of studious, high achieving students. They relied solely on our teachers to instruct us and follow up on our in-class and homework studies. Even though they could not assist us with our homework, they required that we spend our evenings at the kitchen table doing homework. So, many times I stared blankly at my school books, faking my engagement with the material just to suffice my parent's wishes. In the end, our educational progression through each grade was largely the product of our own intrinsic motivation.

Like many Punjabi families, my siblings and I were raised in an extended family setting. In large part, our babysitting grandparents raised us, giving us more leeway than our parents with such things as late bedtimes and sugary sodas with dinner. We enjoyed a great deal of freedom with our grandparents. As our grandparents were completely unable to assist us with our homework or school-related instruction, we were mostly unaccountable for any missed homework assignments.

While growing up, my friends were primarily East Indian of Sikh background and almost exclusively male. Approximately fifteen of my closest friends were born in the Mission Memorial Hospital, the same hospital where my siblings and I were born. We all lived in the same working class neighbourhood for many years, and we all attended the same elementary and high schools. Most of us graduated from the same school within a couple of years of each other. We all played the same team sports, and were competitive and masculine in character. We developed similar interests over the time that we spent together. Even though we all started our lives with similar backgrounds, we became even more similar in character over the years. We were “typical” East Indian males of that area.

All of our parents were immigrants from Punjab, India, and most of them immigrated to Canada during the 1970s, following the passage of Bill C-24 “The Immigration Act of 1976” by the Trudeau government. Although third world immigration was overwhelmingly opposed in Canada during the mid 1970s, the passage of Bill C-24 allowed Indo-Canadians to sponsor the immigration of their relatives from India (Wood, 1978). Thus, the small, yet tightly bound East Indian community of B.C. in the 1970s grew to become the large and tightly bound community it is today.

First or second generation immigrants, we all were friends. Our parents worked in similar industries; our fathers were labourers in the lumber mills, and our mothers were labourers in the food processing industry, which included both farms and production facilities that prepared and packaged food for local sale and export. In addition to their day jobs, some ran businesses. Farming, home construction and renovation, and other contractual services supplemented our parents' incomes.

As the hard work of the first generation of Indo-Canadians turned into prosperity, the priority for the second generation children, the first to be born in Canada, was to attain a good education. After years of hard work and sacrifice, our parents could afford to support our education well beyond high school. Nonetheless, in the beginning, few second generation Indo-Canadians pursued the educational route. I was lucky to have a good educational role model close to home—my uncle. My father's younger brother, who was born in Canada, was the first of our Sidhu family to graduate from high school. After graduating, he went on to complete an undergraduate degree at a major university.

Even though many of my peers did not have an educated Indo-Canadian role model, when they considered their future plans, they often thought about the benefits of a good education. I recall the wide-ranging dreams of my friends, as we imagined our future goals. Beyond our desires for fast cars and a move away from home, we envisioned lives that included careers in law, politics, medicine, teaching, coaching, accounting, and business. We never expressed an interest to follow in our parent's occupations. A common thread throughout our discussions was our parents willingness to provide for our education. They did not want us to endure lives of backbreaking

labour in the polluted factories and sweltering crop fields that they saw as representative of British Columbia's job market.

Despite imagining our future occupations, many of my friends lost interest in school. The redundancy and boredom of their time in class fuelled their restless nature. Although they were capable and intelligent, they were not high-achieving students. In addition, few well-educated Indo-Canadian role models existed within the academic sphere, which contributed to our educationally-regressive behaviour.

Within my group of friends, I observed many big dreams slowly fade and die. Higher education did not seem viable to them because few, if any, young East Indian men they knew had completed an education that led to a respectable white collar profession. Those who did achieve advanced education-based success, never returned to our small town. Due to our youth and inexperience, we were greatly influenced by each other and the older males in our community. Thus, without positive educational role models, many of my friends believed that advanced education was out of their reach.

Unlike the males, many East Indian girls went on to graduate from college or university. I am one of a small group of males amongst my friends who attended and graduated from university. Most of the young men from my youth have chased the promises of easy money. They have worked "blue collar," labour intensive jobs in construction, manufacturing, or industry. By following in the footsteps of the only role models they have ever known, their own parents, they pursued work in similar occupations.

I recruited seven, second generation Indo-Canadian males who were currently enrolled in various high schools in the Fraser Valley region of British Columbia's lower

mainland. I recruited these male participants in November, 2008 and conducted the study beginning in November until July of 2009, to understand re-emerging identity and educational themes. By asking questions about their lived experiences, I aimed at an understanding of their perceptions about school, their community, and self-identity; and how these perceptions affected their educational success and planning for the future. My hope was to identify the common themes of their experiences with respect to their educational success and failure.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce my study of the high school experience of East Indian Sikh males from a selection of British Columbia (B.C.) high schools. I discuss my own background and present my research questions and themes. I also explain my choice to use interchangeable terminology such as Sikhs, Brown, and Apna; all of which were interchangeably used by my participants to describe themselves in relation to their home life and cultural understandings.

The Indo-Canadian population has been steadily growing in B.C since the 1970s. South Asian males are the fastest growing minority group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005). Undoubtedly, newer immigrants and their children are facing similar challenges as those who immigrated before them. I wanted to understand how education is viewed and experienced by second generation East Indians in the Fraser Valley region of B.C. In other words, I wanted to know more about what was going on in the community in which I was raised, and especially, I wanted to know if the mindset and future planning goals of young East Indian high school males had changed since I was their age. These are important questions for my community as well as our larger Canadian society.

As an inspiration for this study, I had observed young Indo-Canadian males disengaging from school and dropping out in higher proportions than their female high school counterparts. As statistics show, the academic gender gap is evident at the post secondary level; for example, in North America, females are annually awarded nearly 60% of all post secondary degrees (NCES, 2005). My own undergraduate and graduate level classes had a greater ratio of females than males. Even though the gender gap is more evident at the post secondary level, the imbalance actually begins earlier in the high

school setting where young males drop out, are kicked out, or completely forgo school to begin working in occupations that offer them a lifetime of lost social and economic opportunities, and therefore, marginalization. These are the important incentives for conducting this research.

Focus of Inquiry

When I conducted my research, the seven participants in my study—young Indo-Canadian males—were all attending high schools in the lower mainland of British Columbia. This is a group of young males with whom I mutually identified, related to, and gained the trust of. This also is a group that has drawn only modest attention from academic researchers. In an era of mass immigration and diversity in Canada and across the globalized world, research pertaining to the education of East Indian males is sorely lacking. Thus, I aim to contribute to solving this problem by reviewing the relevant existing research and then conducting a new study.

The participants were East Indian males who were currently enrolled in high schools across the Fraser Valley region of British Columbia's lower mainland. The participants were native born - second generation Canadians. They were born in Canada, while both of their parents were born outside of Canada (Boyd, 2002). These young men were raised in Punjabi-speaking households and can communicate in both English and their native Punjabi languages. The participants and their families are members of the Sikh religion.

Sikh refers both to a religion and to any person that counts themselves as a member of the Sikh religion. I am a Sikh man; I belong to the Sikh religion. People of the Sikh faith are politically associated with one of the two branches of the Sikh

religion—Orthodox or Moderate. Orthodox Sikhs are baptized, whereas moderate Sikhs are not. Baptized Sikhs are distinguishable by their uncut hair and turbans, as well as by their clothing and visible religious insignia. No participants in my study were baptized Sikhs.

I examined the self perceptions of seven males between 13 to 15 years of age with respect to their self-identity as students and young men. Specifically, I conducted individual in-depth interviews with these young males who attended various high schools in four of British Columbia's most ethnically diverse cities, including Surrey and Abbotsford. I do not provide the names of the remaining two cities, which have small Indo-Canadian populations, because a revelation of these names could compromise the identity of the participants of my study. I interviewed each of the males three times during the course of one year. I conducted the first two interviews face-to-face, in November 2008 and January 2009 and the third interview, by phone in July 2009. Table 1 outlines the timeline of the data collection process.

Table 1

Timeline of the Data Collection Process

Date	Data Collection Process
October 2008	Disseminated study information in B.C.
November 2008	Contacted and discussed study with interested participants and parents
November 2008	First Face-to-Face Interview: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dave – November 11, 2008 2. Ajinder – November 14, 2008 3. Kenny – November 16, 2008 4. Jacob – November 16, 2008 5. Jamie – November 19, 2008 6. Tejpal – November 19, 2008 7. Ray – November 20, 2008
January 2009	Second Face-to-Face Interview: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ajinder – January 11, 2009 2. Jacob – January 11, 2009 3. Jamie – January 11, 2009 4. Kenny – January 12, 2009 5. Tejpal – January 13, 2009 6. Dave – January 14, 2009 7. Ray – January 16, 2009
July 2009	Telephone Follow-up: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jacob – July 09, 2009 2. Jamie – July 09, 2009 3. Kenny – July 09, 2009 4. Dave – July 09, 2009 5. Tejpal – July 10, 2009 6. Ajinder – July 10, 2009 7. Ray – July 11, 2009

Research Questions and Themes

My research questions are the following:

- 1) What do the seven East Indian students perceive as their long term goals?
- 2) How do these participants describe their educational identity?
- 3) How do the participants describe their peer groups and associations? How do these peer groups and associations impact their identity?
- 4) What role do their parents/family play in their education?
- 5) What are the pressures/expectations that the participants identify? From where do these pressures/expectations arise and how do they cope with them?

In my first attempt to answer these initial research questions, I explored several themes: (1) goal setting and self-motivation (2) self-identity (3) role models and support system (4) peer groups (5) expectations (6) belonging (in and out of school). As I conducted my interviews and revisited my data, I began to see an overlap and the need for simplification. I decided to combine some of the questions and themes, and to clarify other questions and themes. By combining, condensing, and clarifying the initial research questions, I have been able to avoid redundancy. This process resulted in a reformulation of the old research questions, which then became the following:

- (1) What are the participant's defined goals and what motivates these goals?
- (2) What pressures and expectations do these participants face? How have these pressures and expectations defined their educational identity?
- (3) With respect to belonging, how do the participants describe their peer groups and role models?

(4) What is the role of parents/family in the education of my participants?

Terminology

Various labels are used in the literature and throughout my thesis to refer to the race of my participants, the race of other people, significant places, and affiliations.

Some common and reappearing terms include the following: East Indian, Indian, Apna, Indo-Canadian, Punjab, Punjabi, Sikh, Gurdwara, Second generation Canadian, South Asian, Moderate, Orthodox or Fundamental. I use terms interchangeably because the participants used them interchangeably.

I use the term *second generation Canadian* when referring to my participants and not first generation Canadian. Some researchers refer to first generation Canadians as those who have immigrated to Canada; therefore, second generation Canadians are the children of these immigrants (Boyd, 2002; Tatla, 1999). In this respect, the Canadian-born offspring who were the participants of my study are second generation Canadians. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I use the term second generation Canadian to describe Canadians who were born in Canada, and who have parents and grandparents born outside of Canada who immigrated to Canada. My use of the term contrasts some researchers mentioned in my literature review who refer to Canadian born Sikhs as the first generation.

East Indian and *Indian* refer to the descendants of India. *Indo-Canadian* refers to a non-resident Indian living in Canada. When I use either East Indian or Indo-Canadian, I am discussing non-resident Indians, unless I explicitly mention something to the contrary. Non-resident Indians are people whose ethnic origins can be traced back to India, although they no longer reside in India. Sikhs and Hindus are Indians or East

Indians. When they live in Canada, I refer to them as Indo-Canadians or East Indians. All my study participants are Sikhs. Therefore, any use of Indo-Canadian or East Indian refers to Sikhs, except in the literature review. In the literature review, many authors tend to group all non-resident Indians as Indians, East Indians, or South Asians, which are rather essentialist terms.

Apna (अपना) pronounced “Up-Nah” is a reference word that means two or more people of the same background or character. In its daily application, reference to *Apna* is reference to similarity. It means similar to me, or similar to us. Punjabi speakers use this word to identify others of the same Punjabi Sikh heritage. *Apna* also is used to relate similar characteristics of two or more people. For example, John is like us (*Apna*) in that we share similar characteristics.

Punjabi is the name of the people that reside in or can be traced back to the state of Punjab, India. The state of Punjab is located in the northwest region of India, which borders on Pakistan. Although Pakistan also has a Punjab region, my literature review exclusively deals with Punjabi Indians.

A *Sikh* is a person who is a member of the Sikh religion. There are over 20,000,000 Sikhs in Punjab, India (Census India, 2001) and unofficial worldwide estimates claim a global Sikh population of more than 30,000,000. *Sikhism* is an independent religion not affiliated with any other major religion of India or the world. Baptized Sikhs prescribe to the fundamental teachings of Sikhism and are distinguishable by their uncut hair and turbans. Baptized Sikhs are also called Orthodox or Fundamental in the Western context.

Gurdwara is the Sikh word for Sikh religious temple, church, or house of sacred worship. The Gurdwara is where Sikh followers congregate to worship and conduct religious ceremonies. Members of my community commonly and interchangeably refer to our holy Gurdwaras as a temple or church. Finally, in some rare instances, individual participants may use a vague term or a Punjabi word that has not been discussed in the preceding paragraphs. In these cases, I immediately provide a translation. For example, Ray, a 15 year old participant, used the word *Jack*, which is the English pronunciation of a Punjabi word meaning troublemaker:

Ray: Well uh, I guess some of my friends are Jacks [troublemakers], but some aren't.

(Ray, personal interview, 16 January, 2009)

Rationale for My Study

By studying a specific sub-group of East Indian Sikh males in a significantly dense Indo-Canadian area of British Columbia, I aim to contribute to the existing research on Indo-Canadian male identity and educational achievement. Increasing awareness of the educational achievement gap of males is an important step towards addressing the challenges that young men face in the classroom. In addition, I hope to shed light on the problems of a group that has not received due attention in the academic scholarship. Additional research into Canada's most populous and fastest growing minority group is vital to building, and planning for, the future of this country.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my study of East Indian Sikh high school males in the lower mainland of B.C. I also discussed my own educational and cultural background. I

elaborated on the current problems in education caused by the gender gap. I explained my reasons for pursuing this topic, and delineated my research questions and themes. I explained the meanings and nuances of my interchangeable terminology, and identified the potential contributions of my study.

In the next chapter, I review the existing literature on Sikh identity in the diaspora and the process of constructed one's educational identity. I begin by presenting the theoretical framework that has shaped the way that I analyze my data. Specifically, I use this theoretical framework to evaluate the changing nature of identity in post-traditional societies (Giddens, 1991) and the formation of an educational identity (Yon, 2000).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter I present my theoretical framework and literature review. I use a post-traditionalist theoretical framework to evaluate the changing nature of individual identity in post-modern societies (Giddens, 1991). I use this framework to understand how the culture and identity of diaspora group members are constructed in the context of a Western host state. By using complementary theories, such as the “theory of acculturation” (Berry, 1997), I also analyze how the school identity of diaspora youth is formed (Yon, 2000). A theory of acculturation postulates that members of migrant communities “integrate” or “assimilate” their identity to that of the Western host state.

In this chapter, I also present a review of the available literature related to the Punjabi Sikh Diaspora and second generation identity formation. I conduct the literature review to understand the common threads that are discussed within the available Sikh-focused academic research.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework draws on the sociology of social evolution. *Social evolution* refers to how actors increase their “adaptation” to the needs of their environment. Adaptation refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands (Berry, 1997, p. 13). With respect to my study, the actors are my second generation participants, and the environment is Western culture. In Chapter 4, I use this theoretical framework to analyze my data. Studies involving second generation Punjabi youth, with respect to traditional culture, religion, and multicultural identity is limited in many respects. The epistemological assumptions of researchers

concerning second generation Sikhs are embedded in theories of multiculturalism and multicultural epistemologies are limiting to the realities of diaspora Sikh identity formation. Second generation Sikhs create identities in relation to social interaction and not by way of cultural dictate. Therefore, a better understanding of the impact of modern Western societies on the first generation of Sikhs born outside of the Punjab is necessary for comprehending their identity formation. It is important to understand how this group develops its identity through interaction with Canadian schools and Western society.

Anthony Giddens' work on post-traditional societies has deeply influenced my understanding of identity. In his theory of "structuration," Giddens explains the duality of structure. Individuals are free agents, free to create their self-identity, but they are not free from the structural constraints that set limits to free activity (Wallace and Wolf, 1999). I discuss Giddens' analysis of self-identity, and apply it to the themes of culture and education in modern societies. Giddens' theory of "structuration" appropriately explains the ontology of social life. In discussing finite epistemology, Giddens says: "I think it wrong to slant social theory too unequivocally towards abstract and highly generalized questions of epistemology, as if developments in the social sciences had to wait upon these" (Giddens, 1984, p. xviii).

Giddens (2006) argues that many beliefs and customary practices (such as religion) that used to define identities in traditional societies are now less influential. In the twenty-first century, we make our choices by using our modern variety of guiding principles, such as those provided by television or experts. Thus, modern individuals are "self-reflexive" in their ability to decide what and who they should be (Giddens, 1991, p.

5). I draw on Giddens' notion of "self-reflexivity" to understand the identity construction within the Indian Sikh diaspora.

John Berry's (1994, 1997) theory of acculturation argues that migration has psychological consequences on the immigrant's identity. This theory suggests that the identities of individuals and groups are innately challenged when they immigrate to a new society and try to make sense of what they expect and what is expected of them (Horenczyk, 1997). Berry believes that these individuals and groups are conflicted by adaptation issues, the resolution of which results in one of four acculturation outcomes "integration, assimilation, separation or marginalization" (Phinney, 2001, p. 495). In my study, I focus only on integration and assimilation. "Integration" places mutual value on maintaining both cultures, whereas "assimilation" places a greater value on maintaining the culture of the host society.

I also draw on the work of Daniel Yon, 2000, who espouses a dialectical culture as product and process. Yon explains that culture and identity are in a constant reformulation through the interaction of people and institutions. Yon describes identity development as an ongoing and elusive process. I use Yon's work to help me conceptualize my own educational research, and like Yon, I also conduct a study of high school student's perceptions of self-identity. Yon explains that a student's search for belonging intersects with authority and popular mass culture to contribute to identity development.

Identity and self-reflexivity

Giddens (1991) describes the self as a reflexive project: "we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (p. 75). Self-reflexive individuals make decisions with a

forward direction, ascertaining who they are and who they might become. In the Sikh Diaspora, a large proportion of Sikhs have broken from the traditional mould of being subservient perpetuators of culture and religion. Among the first generation, a clear division exists between the two predominant factions of Sikhism, the moderate and orthodox. The moderate Sikh man is self-reflexive in adjusting to his life in the diaspora. The moderate Sikh male has created a distinguishable self-identity based on his own realities, and the narratives of his world. For instance, the moderate man, unlike the orthodox Sikh, does not wear a turban. This choice was a significant decision for pioneering Sikhs who felt the need to remove their turbans in the earliest days of their immigration because of a racist backlash. Thus, they adjusted their appearance to match the contemporary Western norms and to ease the racist reactions that inhibited their smooth transition into Canada. In other words, they adjusted their identity because they were self-reflexive about their diaspora situation:

Reflexive appropriation of bodily processes and development is a fundamental element of life-political debates and struggles [...] The body has not just become an inert entity, subject to commodification or discipline [...] The body itself—as mobilized in praxis—becomes more immediately relevant to the identity the individual promotes (Giddens, 1991, p. 218).

Giddens describes the self as fluid and malleable “always in the process of negotiated and renegotiated” (Bryant & Jary, 1997, p. 333). Identity is a project for each individual, and in order to sustain a consistent identity, individuals create narratives in which they see themselves. The school is just one context of influence as “schools may position children, but children also position themselves as they seek ‘to fashion

themselves' to themselves and others in particular contexts and construct their own reflexive projects of selfhood" (Ivanic, 1998 as cited in Maguire & Curdt-Christiansen, 2007, p. 53). In creating a self-identity, individuals are free to choose who they want to be, but not all of the time, since they remain bound by structural constraints.

Structure consists of rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems—that is, the rules that are articulated in social interaction and tell people how to “do” social life, and the resources on which people can call to achieve their objectives (Wallace & Wolf, 1999, p. 181).

Identity is a narrative that is constantly reshaping in relation to our ongoing interactions with other people. Identity is a constant renegotiation in relation to the conditions it encounters. In this respect, it might be more appropriate to talk about identification rather than identity (Jenkins, 2004). Jenkins says that “identification is often a matter of imposition and resistance, claim and counterclaim, rather than a consensual process of mutuality and negotiation” (Jenkins, 2004, p. 73).

Self-reflexive identity formation is both liberating and disconcerting when applied to traditional Eastern societies such as the Sikhs. Traditional societies use narratives to form the identity of individuals according to predetermined social roles. For example, women are expected to perform household duties that are prescribed by gender/social roles. Giddens' theory of a post-traditional society suggests that we are forced to create our own roles, even though, as he also points out, these roles inevitably are constrained by social structure (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). A Punjabi woman who is expected to maintain her household duties will face an instantaneous social backlash if she decides to shrug her role as a homemaker, and thus, individuals' narratives can have an inevitable

effect on their family. Therefore, a reflexive project requires a great deal of work and anxiety (Giddens, 1990). A Sikh who decides to shave his beard and remove his turban in adulthood must bear the potential consequence of being isolated from the orthodox Sikh community. A constantly evolving identity creates a certain degree of apprehension with respect to one's "real" identity.

Stuart Hall (1996) states that the "self" is formed through interaction with the outside world. Specifically, self-identity is developed in relation to "significant others who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols—the culture—of the world he/she inhabited (Hall, 1996, p. 597). Identity is formed by the interaction of self and society. Individual may have an essence of a true self, but even that essence is formed and modified through a continuing interaction with the social and cultural worlds. The "post-modern-subject" is the product of this evolving identity.

The post-modern-subject is a shifting and unstable individual with no fixed, essential, or permanent identity due to the influences of globalization, migration, technological interconnectedness, and popular culture. With respect to interconnectedness, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2004) believes that globalization, increasing social mobility, and greater flexibility in employment are some of the factors contributing to a sense of disassociation from the traditional resources of identity formation. He argues that these traditional identity formation resources, such as religious guidance, are no longer accepted in straightforward way by modern society.

For example, immigrant must constantly renegotiate their identity to make sense of themselves and their place in the world. A second generation Sikh can be conceptualized as a post-modern subject who can no longer rely solely on Punjabi culture

or Sikh religion to guide his journey in the world. Displaced from the geographic and cultural centre of Sikhism, second generation Sikhs must negotiate Western concepts, such as the dating culture of North America, unfamiliar to the traditional Punjabi culture.

Sikhs' simultaneous exposure to a Western social world and an Eastern traditional family puts them in a constant state of identity negotiation. As Hall (1990) posits:

If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story about ourselves. The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with—at least temporarily (p. 237).

In *Modernity and Self-identity*, Giddens (1991) presents a similar view of twentieth-century institutions and their affect on individual and group identity. He views the media as one of the institutions that affect individual identity: “the media do not mirror realities but in some part form them” (Giddens, 1991, p. 27). Giddens is concerned with the development of self-identity in a changing social environment. He also argues that the institutions of contemporary society are often at odds with established cultural principles such as religion: “Modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order, in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact” (Giddens, 1991, p. 1). The Sikh religion is a traditional Eastern religion that is undermined by modern institutions because religion is not as malleable as the other institutions that serve the needs of contemporary society.

A traditional, functionalist account of socialization perceives youth “as passive recipients of adult influences, a ‘becoming’ rather than a ‘being’ in their own right” (Buckingham, 2008, p. 4). Giddens believes that the customary traditions and belief systems of traditional societies were able to define our identities. For example, the Sabbath, or day of rest, is not always possible in modern societies. With globalization and the redistribution of populations, some who hold traditional religious beliefs must work on the Sabbath if they want to survive in a new country. For Christians, the Sabbath is Sunday, and for certain Muslims, the Sabbath is Friday. In Giddens’s view of “late modern” societies, identity-defining beliefs that once were prominent have decreased in their influence. He regards this type of society as “post-traditional.” In a globalized world, diasporic groups may be prone to adapting their former beliefs and traditions to the culture of their host society. *Diaspora*, as it pertains to groups, is any kind of dispersion in space that crosses state borders (Brubaker, 2005, p.5). Thus, the crossing of borders certainly demands compromise with and/or acceptance of foreign traditions, cultures, and identities. Interestingly, the compromise of cultural differences applies to both the diaspora group and the majority group of the host state.

Culture

In diaspora communities, the second generation comes into contact with a new set of “significant others” (Hall, 1997), with people such as teachers to whom the first generation was never intimately exposed. School is the catalyst for building relationships and defining oneself according to a different set of Western values. Although the first generation interacts with the majority group, the second generation intermingles and competes with their majority counterparts. Significantly, these interactions are unlike the

previous generations' Western experience. Many of these experiences occur at school, at a time when the young are still developing their core identity and personality. In the second generation of Sikh Diaspora, a complex East-West culture clash emerges (Ghuman, 2000), which I conceptualize using the acculturation theory.

Acculturation is defined as a culture change that results from continuous, first hand contact between two distinct cultural groups (Berry, 1992). Berry (1997) found that people who were new to a society changed their previous culturally-defined behaviour. Berry believes that cross-cultural psychology can explain this change in behaviour at both the individual and collective levels. Berry's theory describes two forms of acculturation that I use to assess second generation Sikh youth. The first is "integration" and the second is "assimilation." *Integration* is the process of adapting to a new culture while still maintaining a relationship with your heritage identity. Berry (1997) believes that "integration can only be 'freely' chosen and pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open towards cultural diversity [...] integration can only be pursued in societies that are explicitly multicultural" (p. 9).

A second form of acculturation is *assimilation*. Individuals and groups that assimilate place less value on the maintenance of their heritage culture, and favour a relationship with the culture of their host society. Often, assimilation is a personal cultural choice, but assimilation is also facilitated by structural constraints. For example, national policies and programs "expect all immigrant and ethno-cultural groups to become like those in the dominant society" (Berry, 1997, p. 11).

Canada is habitually viewed as a mosaic rather than a melting pot. Media influence, popular culture, and majority group identification all contribute to cohesion

and identity formation. Identity is both exclusive to the individual and common to a larger social order. Integration and assimilation determine the level to which a migrant or second generation Canadian, self identifies with the values of East verses West. Our identity distinguishes us from other people while also signifying our relationship to preferred groups. Contemplating personal and social identities is a continual and conflictual development arising from the dual socialization process, home and school (Ghuman, 2000). A sudden or gradual change of identity can be stressful. To assimilate with one group in place of another can result in the breaking of life-long ties, such as those that bind an individual to a religious identity.

Challenging the dominant forms of group identity is known as identity politics (Gayer, 2007). In the context of the theoretical framework of the present study, identity politics creates a tension between individual desires and group expectations. Many of these desires lead to a form of acculturation. For example, an innocent boy-girl relationship, taboo in the Punjabi culture, is a form of integration into Canadian society. In an arranged-marriage society, lustful relationships can result in serious consequences. Recently, many headline news stories have told the Canadian public about the Muslim and Indo-Canadian women who were murdered by their own family for engaging in secret relationships outside of wedlock (Patel, 2008), murders that ironically are known in some traditional societies as “honour killings.”

These types of incidences are familiar to traditional Eastern communities, including the Indo-Canadian community. In the last decade, at least a dozen honour killings were committed in Canada, including the murder of Amandeep Atwal, a seventeen year old B.C. girl, who was stabbed to death by her father in 2003 (Proudfoot,

2009). Some Indo-Canadian youth are caught between the Eastern customs of arranged marriages and Western freedoms, and some young couples may secretly carry on their relationship after it is exposed, and after their families forbid it.

From the perspective of acculturation theory, these secret relationships are considered to be a form of assimilation because essentially, these youths are running away from their traditional cultural restrictions. Even though secret relationships are not a Western societal norm, the action of pursuing a love interest warrants the terminology of assimilation. In some cases, individuals from arranged-marriage cultures simultaneously perform the roles of both the Eastern traditionalist and the self-determined Western liberal. At home they may play the role of the cultural traditionalist, acting according to the prescribed gender and cultural norms of that group. At school or outside the home, they disassociate from their traditional role and act in accordance to a Western ideology.

Goffman (1959), working within the tradition of social interactionism, provides a “dramaturgical” account of social interaction as one way to explain the dual roles at play in identity politics. Goffman explains his theory of dramaturgical social interaction as a kind of theatrical performance that people act out in their daily lives rather than on stage. By creating certain dramatic impressions of themselves for others, individuals are enabled to achieve their goals. Goffman calls this process “impression management,” which also may include collaborative performances with others. Goffman regards dramatic impression “front-stage” and genuine impression “back-stage” behaviour.

When “on front stage,” for example at home, Sikh youth do not discuss romantic relationships and courtships with their family. In fact, they deny any allegations or

rumours of a relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend. This denial may be supported by a sibling or a trusted cousin. This confidant vouches for the sincerity of the front stage comments. Back stage, among trusted friends and family, Sikh youth can be more honest. Goffman's dramaturgical social interaction explains the dichotomy of thought and action among second generation Sikhs who are struggling with identity politics.

Belonging

Belonging is about being included and accepted. Belonging is a connection to a person or group, and is crucial to psychosocial development (Sullivan, 1953). The need for social belonging is a basic human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Social belonging is an internalized view of connectedness. Stigmatization or not fitting-in can give rise to belonging uncertainty. Belonging uncertainty undermines motivation and achievement in the school setting (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Group belonging can reinforce psychological and emotional identification with a group. In the school setting, "identification, described as a feeling of belongingness to the school milieu and as the internalization of the school's goals and values is thought to be essential to academic perseverance and secondary school graduation" (Veronneau, 2008, p. 431).

Daniel Yon (2000) uses a postmodern understanding of identity to describe how culture is a fluid and ongoing process. In *Elusive Culture*, Yon (2000) does not rely on one theory or a specific framework to analyze his research findings; instead he uses "different forms of attribute theory" (Yon, 2000, p. 10) to analyze his collected data. Attribute theory describes how individuals' perception of self or others influences their own motivation. With respect to education, attribute theory emphasizes that learners' current self-perception influences their current success or failure. If students have

positive self-perceptions of themselves as students, they are motivated to repeat the actions that made them feel good about themselves (Weiner, 1992).

Daniel Yon conducted research at Maple Heights High School, a urban high school in Toronto, and analyzed the data feedback from teachers and students to help him understand identity formation. He proposes that the children who participated in his study created their educational identities through a process that shifted from situation to situation, which was influenced by factors such as the popular media. Yon's work is sociologically similar to that of Giddens and Hall in its argument against a conventional pedagogic analyses that presupposes that culture is fixed and stable.

Yon (2000) concludes that identity is malleable, since it always is being constructed and reconstructed in relation to our daily social interactions. He recognizes that the students of Maple Heights High School were the sociological lens through which he understands identity development. He also points out that in finding their place in their social milieu, students are influenced by their interactions with authority and popular culture. These interactions, whether personal or through the popular mass media, contribute to identity development: "The shifts in Jose's discourse on race and identity are obviously tied to shifts and trends in popular culture, particularly music and dress" (Yon, 2000, p. 97).

Second generation Sikhs also experience contradictory and shifting discourses as they search for their self-identity:

Second-generation 'British Asian' adolescents (refers to South Asians only) are growing up in two distinctive cultural contexts—one of the home and the other of

the school. The home represents their traditional values, beliefs and attitude orientations, whereas the school embodies the values and norms of British society.

There are divergences of opinion and attitude, often conflicting, over key areas such as individual autonomy vs family responsibility (Ghuman, 1991, p. 121).

The theory of “domain identification” posits that “certain groups of individuals realize that a negative stereotype exists about their group in a given context (e.g., Blacks in academics, females in mathematics), this mere recognition can significantly hinder their performance in that domain” (Smith & White, 2001, p. 1041). This theory also assumes that sustained school success requires identification with the school. Finding a sense of belonging by relating to teachers or having positive influences can facilitate a positive identification with school. Those who positively identified with school achieved better results on standardized tests and had a more positive emotional outlook (Smith & White, 2001). Individuals or entire groups can become negatively stereotyped: “those who have become ‘domain identified’ face the further barrier of stereotype threat, the threat that others’ judgments or their own actions will negatively stereotype them in the domain” (Steele, 1997, p. 613).

Second generation young Sikh males are engaged in a process of self-negotiation at home and at school. Some males rebel against primary authority figures such as parents and teachers, and they adjust their identities according to a process of “othering.” *Othering* is the ability of the State or the dominant ideology “to ‘produce’ an ‘other,’ different from the national ‘us,’ on the basis of a series of social and cultural characteristics” (Caballero, 2009, p. 172). Hall (2003) describes how the “other” is a process in which the individual internalizes and views himself as the outsider.

Yon (2000) found that the teachers and students at Maple Heights High School diverged in their conceptualization of the school experience not because of their different generational experiences. Instead, he argues that different cultural experiences, rather than the generational divide, explain the different school experiences of the students and teachers:

There is a gap between two sets of experiences at play in the conceptualization of schooling: those of the students and those of the teachers. These are not necessarily generational gaps, but cultural ones. The things that the teachers are passionate about are being summoned in talk about what Maple Heights used to be are gone—lost objects. What the students are passionate about, on the other hand, teachers have less access to, and there is little or no knowledge to bridge that gap (Yon, 2000, p. 130).

It is possible that both generational and cultural experiences separate students and teachers as well as children and parents. In school, students and teachers are distanced by their different upbringing and interests. At home, children and parents also are separated by a different upbringing (at least with respect to their country of origin) as well as different interests. Yon (2000) explains that identity is created by shared experience as well as difference. Caught between two worlds, youth must find a sense of belonging to a peer group or social identity. By constantly negotiating their perceived and idealized identity, they create their own contemporary identity. Identity resolution only occurs when a person has been through the process of negotiation, and has made clear choices about who he or she wants to become (Marcia, 1980).

Literature Review

This literature review critically examines the existing research on Sikh males in British Columbia (B.C.) high schools, and the contemporary and cultural forces that form their educational identity. How do they come to understand their educational achievement? What are the social forces that contribute to their identity as students in B.C.? Currently, little educational research exists that directly relates to Sikh high school males and their literacy experience in B.C. I hope that my thesis will help to amalgamate the present research and add a new dimension that will promote further studies.

I begin by briefly introducing some current educational research on North American education. I discuss education, gender, and career and then use this information to show the importance of my own research. Next, I discuss the relevant educational research on the Sikh Diaspora communities outside of Canada. *Diaspora* is the migration of a group from their homeland to a new home, otherwise known as a host state. Previously, the term has been used to identify the migration of people for a number of reasons, including, exile, revolt, dispersion, or migration (Brubaker, 2005). The present study is concerned with the latter use of the term—migration—in this case, a mass migration coupled with the formation of a distinct identity.

As Nayar (2008) suggests, the “Sikh diaspora has been, in part, reflective of the pressure of developing one’s identity as an ethnic minority outside the homeland” (p. 20). In the literature review, I compile the Canadian research that analyzes visible minority education (Smythe & Toohey, 2009; Johnson & Siemens, 2006; Krahn & Taylor, 2005), and I also present the relevant cultural research on B.C. Sikhs (Sandhu & Nayar, 2008; Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006). By doing so, I compare the diaspora experience of first

and second generation Sikhs in B.C., as well as the distinctiveness of each generation, and the complexity of the acculturation process for second generation B.C. Sikh males.

Educational development and socio-economic considerations

A serious issue facing males, including males from minority groups, is that with respect to gender, they are inequitably disengaging from education (Pollack, 2000). Global figures point to a long standing, often unnoticed gender gap in education that shows that males score lower on standardized academic tests than girls. For example, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) implemented a three year study of fifteen year olds, and found that girls outperform males in overall educational markers across thirty-five developed countries (Gurian, 2007). Students need a basic education to successfully participate in the demanding labour force that awaits them and those who do not earn a high school diploma “face a life-course of underemployment and its correlates” (Archambault, 2009, p. 651).

By comparing high school graduates to non-graduates, a number of glaring social discrepancies become obvious, for example, the earning gap. Workers with less than a high school education earn disproportionately less annual income and “Canadian workers without a high school diploma are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than are those with a bachelor’s degree” (Statistics Canada, 2008). They also suffer from a higher proportion of unemployment. When assessing the incomes of high school graduates verses non-graduates, individual high school dropouts are found to lose on the average an estimated income of over \$3,419.17 per year when compared to high school graduates (Hankivsky, 2008, p. 36). For the public, the monetary loss from non-graduates

is equally as significant, since Canadians are short-changed by the loss of income tax revenue and employment insurance premiums.

Beyond healthcare and welfare, additional societal costs are associated with high school non-graduates. For example, high school dropouts have a greater likelihood than high school graduates to be involved in criminal activity (Cohen, 1998). Criminal activity includes a clear monetary cost when the economics of criminal delinquency and imprisonment are accessed. The average daily cost of housing an inmate in a Canadian federal penitentiary in 2004/2005 was \$259.05, and the yearly cost is \$94,553.25 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

B.C. Sikhs

The British Columbian Sikh community has always had a mixed media image. Even though they are leaders in many fields and sectors including business and agriculture, and are respected for their ability to maintain their distinct identity, they also suffer from an ongoing image crisis. Since the late 1970s, as Sikhs around the world were linked to the civil war in India that pitted Indira Gandhi—a Hindu Prime Minister—against Sikh Separatists, diaspora Sikhs have been associated with extremism and militarism. In this civil war, Sikhs violently engaged the Indian government to try to establish their own independent state of Khalistan (Nayar, 2004).

Two male Sikh British Columbians were accused of, and recently tried for, the greatest mass murder in Canadian history. In 1985, two bombs were placed on two separate planes leaving the Vancouver International Airport. One of the bombs killed two baggage handlers, and the second bomb killed all 329 passengers on board Air India

flight 182, bound for New Delhi. The media coverage of the Air India bombing indiscriminately portrayed Orthodox Sikhs as international terrorists (Nayar, 2008).

In recent years, the Indo Canadian male population of B.C. has once again become a stereotyped and feared group. A report compiled by CanWest News, and reported by the Vancouver Sun, found that many residents of Vancouver blame South Asians for most of the crimes that occur in that city. Despite contrary figures from police arrest statistics, 56% of the 8,431 participants specifically identified “East Indians” as being responsible for the perceived crime epidemic in Vancouver. By comparison, 5% percent of the respondent group singled out “Caucasian/White” as being responsible for the perceived crime problem in Vancouver (Assisi, 2008).

Whether media-perpetuated or self-inflicted, the reality is that South Asians are victims of stereotyping and negative profiling, which are reasons enough to warrant an increase in academic research, which should focus on the sociological conditions of this emerging migrant group. In the next section of this literature review, I examine the Sikh Diaspora as it applies to educational achievement. Then, I take a close look at the Sikh Diaspora in B.C., with a particular focus on the acculturation of first and second generation Sikhs. I also examine this group’s early settlement history and significant cultural data.

Sikh diaspora and education

The United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada are home to some of the largest populations of the Sikh Diaspora (Ghuman, 2000). It was not until the large influx of immigrants during the late 1960s and 1970s that Canada began to amass a considerable Sikh diaspora population (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Despite the large worldwide

Diaspora populations of today, specialized sociological studies and basic statistical information is lacking regarding Sikhs at home and abroad. As Cipriani (2006) points out: “In fact, there is not a wide ranging sociological study, able to tell us what dynamics there are regarding the Sikhs, be it in the Punjab (the land where they both originate and are most concentrated) or elsewhere in the world” (p. 474). Accordingly, “there is little published research dedicated to the education of Punjabi-speaking children in Canada” (Smythe & Toohey, 2009, p. 42).

I have found that the research that does exist is concentrated on the largest Sikh diaspora in the United Kingdom (U.K.). British academics and policy makers have been concerned with and researching the educational achievement of ethnic minorities, particularly South Asians, since the 1980’s (Abbas, 2002). Despite this research, firm conclusions about the educational achievement of South Asians have not been drawn in the U.K. U.K. research does point to the fact that Hindus and Sikhs perform relative to their social class. For example, a middle class Sikh will try to increase his family’s social and financial class standing by way of educational attainment. The British researchers found that minority educational achievement is in part due to the effectiveness of their schools (Abbas, 2002). Hindus and Sikhs, the two groups that comprise the majority of the South Asian diaspora, are on par or more educated than the majority population. This phenomenon is a pattern of continued success as first generation British Sikh immigrants were more educated than the majority population of the host state. There were similar findings amongst Canada’s Sikh immigrants who arrived during the 1960s and 1970s. Up to 80% of Sikhs immigrants to Canada had graduated from high school in India (Singh, 1981 as cited in Johnston, 2005, p. 1078).

The British research also has shown that second generation Indians are more likely to experience an educational advantage in relation to other significant visible minority groups. Indians outperform Muslims, in part due to the constraints Muslims feel between their religion and the teachings of a secular education. Unlike Muslims, Indians of middle class or higher socio-economic status were viewed as above average achievers and are widely accepted by teachers and society in general (Rothon, 2009).

Most of the Canadian research on minorities has grouped visible minorities, irrespective of their origin, and has compared the accumulated minority group data to the majority group. Undoubtedly, this type of broad research is problem-laden, since it cannot account for the massive discrepancies between visible minority groups. For example, “university completion rates for Chinese-Canadian youth are two to three times higher than the national average” (Krahn & Taylor, 2005, p. 409). I believe that the inclusion of high-achieving groups, such as Chinese or Korean-Canadians, with a low achieving group, such as Caribbean-Canadians, results in deficient data.

In educational research in Canada and the U.K., South Asians, comprised mostly of Sikhs and Hindus, are grouped together. This type of collective analysis is extremely problem laden, since it is unreliable for determining precise statistics for either Sikhs or Hindus. It does not control for the significant cultural differences between these two groups, which are distinctly different, especially with respect to their value systems reflecting their own religions beliefs. By grouping Sikhs and Hindus together, this research underestimates the impact of the religious and cultural traditions that distinguish these groups.

Research that groups participants together based on their geographic global origin is incredibly problematic. Researching South Asians as one group is similar to studying Franco and Anglo Quebecers as one group. In my opinion, combining Franco and Anglo Quebecers together as one group for an educational or social study overlooks their individual histories, cultures, and other relevant factors that are unique to each of their identities. Another example that emphasizes a similar problem associated with groupings based on geographical origin would be Middle East Diaspora research. When conducting social educational research about Canadian minority groups, it would be frivolous to group second generation Canadian-Lebanese with second generation Israeli- Jews. Despite an often similar origin (the Middle East), some would argue that these two groups have many more differences than similarities.

Even though Canadian educational research continues to group together all South Asians groups, this type of grouping is not without some advantages. One advantage is that South Asian research is being conducted and thus is also accumulating. In a general sense, all inquiries contribute to the void in academic research. This type of research can be analyzed and used to further study the entire group or its sub-populations. Davies and Guppy conducted one such study in 1998. They assessed the percentage of visible minority members in the age group of twenty and above who had graduated from high school. They found that 72.6% of native born South Asian men over the age of twenty were high school graduates. This number was markedly below the 92.5% of Korean male high school graduates. It was also fell below both genders of Chinese, Filipino, Korean, West Asians, as well as below the percentage of Arab women who graduated from high school (Reitz & Somerville, 2004).

The Canadian Learning Council (CLC) conducted a similar educational study in 2002. As discussed in Samuel and Basavarajappa's (2006) study, the CLC compared the education and salary of visible minorities to that of non-visible minority members. They found that "47.5% of visible minority Canadians had university degrees compared to only 26.6% of non-visible minority Canadians" (p. 257). They also found it common among degree holders that visible minority men and women were earning disproportionately lower salaries than their majority group counterparts.

The combining of distinct ethnic groups into a single group is common and can be dangerously inaccurate. These types of studies have many problems, since they give only one voice to a diverse number of distinct ethnic groups. They do not account for any abnormal data that may vary from group to group. They also overlook the individual backgrounds and social concerns of the individual groups. These types of studies highlight some of the problems that I encountered when I tried to summarize and analyze the available educational literature on the Sikh community in B.C.

Census Canada reports that the South Asian community is Canada's largest minority group. At 1.26 million persons, the South Asian community represents just over 4% of Canada's total 2006 population. In British Columbia, the South Asian population is the second largest minority group with 262,290 persons (Statistics Canada, 2007). The Canadian government estimates that by 2017, the combined ethnic minority population of Vancouver will become the majority population of the city (Statistics Canada, 2005). The ethnic minority group with the largest population will be Sikhs.

In 2001, 64% of all South Asians in British Columbia were East Indians, self-affiliated with the Sikh religion (Statistics Canada, 2003). Nearly 50% of all Canadian

Sikhs reside in B.C. (Statistics Canada, 2003). The cities of Surrey and Abbotsford, two of the four cities in which I conducted my research study, are home to some of the largest populations of Sikhs in B.C., and the world. Surrey is the second largest city in B.C. (Vancouver is the largest), and the Sikh faith represents the largest number of people who claim to be religious in the city. Abbotsford is the fifth largest city in B.C., and Sikhism is Abbotsford's second largest religion, Christian Protestant is the largest (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Diasporas are any de-territorialized or transnational population that lives in a land different from its land of origin, and that maintains links with the homeland (Brubaker, 2005). The Sikh community is an immigrant group that originates in the state of Punjab, India (Nayar 2004). Sikhs began arriving in Canada in 1904. They found manual labour employment in the lumber and saw mills. The earliest Sikhs envisioned working for several years in Canada to accumulate several thousand dollars with an "objective to go back to their villages where even \$200 would be a fortune" (Johnston, 1988, p. 2). Beginning in the 1960s, and increasing to a great extent post-1976 when immigration policies changed to allow greater non-European immigration, most Sikhs living in Canada were able to sponsor the immigration of their immediate and extended families to Canada.

The first generation Punjabi Sikh immigrants living in British Columbia originated from agricultural farming communities. Even as Canadian citizens, many of them still maintain the legal ownership of their homes and property in Punjab, India. As Sandhu and Nayer (2008) point out: "This connection with the Punjab, to a certain extent, allows for the transmission of cultural values to remain intact, such as the communal

values attributed to traditional agricultural societies” (p. 34). Community association and participation is strong among B.C.’s Sikh community. The annual Sikh “Vaisakhi” parade in Surrey, B.C. is attended by more than 100,000 Sikhs. Even in smaller Sikh diaspora communities like New York, more than 20,000 Sikhs attend the annual Vaisakhi parade (Mann, 2000, p. 270).

The Vancouver Sikh diaspora is an ideal symbol of true multiculturalism. Sikh diasporas have shown a tendency to “create a distinct identity based on memories of a temporally and geographically distant past, reconstructed to suit the needs of the present” (Gayer, 2007, p. 4). The term diaspora, as applied to B.C.’s Sikh community, suggests the existence of concrete links between the migrated Punjabi Sikhs and their homeland (Gayer, 2007). Sikhs are a diaspora social group that has been able to maintain and project a common identity for its members distinct from that of its host or home societies. Maintaining ties to a homeland is a credible source of self-knowledge and cultural appreciation. Staying in touch with relatives in the Punjab or owning property there allows diaspora Sikhs to remain connected with their homeland. In B.C., the large Sikh community is able to replicate the religious and cultural events of the homeland, which enables it to pass on the Punjabi Sikh traditions to the younger generations.

The second generation of Indo-Canadians, the first to be born in Canada, may not share the same perception of a Punjabi homeland. The second generation Canadians may hold a different set of values than the first generation, especially towards a Punjabi homeland that is not their own country of birth. They may or may not place a similar value on a foreign Punjabi culture. Researchers of the Sikh diaspora believe that data is

insufficient to conclude how “second and third generation Sikhs, schooled in western countries feel or perceive about Punjab” (Tatla, 2001, p. 183).

In the next section of this literature review, I examine how the first and second generation has experienced their process of assimilation and integration, and how those experiences have formed their identities. I emphasize identity and the clash of values that have caused a generational personality divide.

Punjabi culture and religion in diaspora.

The Punjabi community greatly values cultural traditions and religion. Some Indo-Canadian youth find themselves torn between two obligations to identify with a traditional Punjabi culture, while others entertain the more natural identification with a host culture that they understand (Ghuman, 1994a). Ghuman’s (1997) comparative study of Sikh and Muslim youth shows that Sikh youth, more than Muslim youth, desire assimilation with their host community. Muslim youth, especially males, prefer to maintain their traditional culture, despite the pressures of host society acculturation (Ghuman, 1997). But Punjabi culture has remained intact, in part because of the maintenance of the Punjabi Language.

At home, in their extended families, Sikhs communicate in Punjabi and it is estimated that nearly all second generation Sikhs in diaspora communities speak Punjabi. It was found that 96% of one U.K. study’s second generation Sikhs diaspora students spoke Punjabi, and 50% were able to read and write Punjabi (Ghuman, 1994b) and they hypothesized that the statistics were similarly reflected in the Canadian Sikh diaspora. This is a form of selective acculturation that has been studied and understood by diaspora researchers such as Levitt & Waters, 2002. They found second generation Americans to

be involved in a co-ethnic community that supported their parents' home language and norms. The research shows that a lack of intergenerational conflict, as well as the support of co-ethnic friends supported the transition of both generations into America life.

The second generation has become the mediator between the first generation and the West. The second generation is able to translate and teach Western customs to an uneducated first generation. Although, second generation Sikhs have not abandoned Punjabi language and culture, they have begun to develop a dissonant form of acculturation. Dissonant acculturation occurs when young people have greater contact with society than their parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Thus, second generation Indo-Canadians adopt Western customs and the English language much quicker than their parents. A re-emerging and unaddressed problem within the Sikh diaspora is that Punjabi parents cannot assist their children with their English homework (Smythe & Toohey, 2009). The effect has been that Sikh diaspora youth are unequally underachieving in British Columbia's school system. Smythe & Toohey observed that based in part on government mandated exams, a primarily Sikh populated public school ranked "865/1013 ... 49% of the suburban schools grade 7 students were not meeting expectations" (p. 42).

Alternative schools, such as Sikh private schools are less desirable to many Sikh students and parents. Students want to attend neighbourhood public schools with their neighbourhood peers. In addition, Punjabi schools are not as well funded as the public schools supported by the B.C. Ministry of Education and some Sikh parents do not want their children to attend Sikh schools because of their perceived substandard reputation. As Ghuman (1994b) points out:

It is interesting to note, in this context, the state of language schools organized by Sikh communities in Vancouver, Surrey and Abbotsfield (Abbotsford) [...] are quite inadequate to fulfill the function they profess to undertake. Poorly trained and paid teachers, outmoded books, unfamiliar materials and illustration, large classes and often uninteresting and often dogmatic methods of teaching are regrettably features of these schools. They cannot possibly compete with state funded schools in their facilities (p. 53).

Consumed by Western influence, and lacking Punjabi instruction, the vast majority of second generation Punjabi-Canadians do not rely on their church to control and dictate their daily life. Second generation diaspora Sikhs are the first generation of Punjabis to be born outside of the Punjab, and so they have few things in common with the daily lives and spaces of the people living in the Punjab. Second generation Sikhs live in a society where their homeland culture and religion are not dominant. Quite possibly, for the needs of Western Sikhs, the Sikh religion is irrelevant and outdated.

Another reason for the general decline of the significance of religion to Sikhs is the negative racial attitudes experienced by the first generation Sikhs. Many of the earliest Sikhs who immigrated to Canada were forced to assimilate a Western style of dress and manner. This forced assimilation resulted in early Diaspora Sikhs removing their beards and turbans, so they could gain acceptance by the majority group. As the Canadian Sikh population grew, so did the number of Canadian Sikhs without turbans and beards. More recently, American Sikh males were targeted post 9/11. Some of these men removed their turbans and beards because of the negative and misplaced racism (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007).

Racial bigotry is not exclusively directed towards the East Indian population. Many visible minority groups in B.C. were excluded and humiliated for their differences. As late as the 1960s, Vancouver property covenants explicitly prohibited sale to Orientals. Vancouver landlords also discriminated against renters on the basis of their race. Only a few decades ago, some visible Vancouver lawn signs read: “No dogs or Chinamen” (Lee, 2008, p. 898).

Similarly, Chinese British Columbians are a proud and traditional group that has worked hard and bonded to fight racially motivated discrimination (Lee, 2008). Early Chinese and Sikh immigrants to Canada found comfort in remaining attached to their larger Chinese and Sikh communities. Currently, the racism of times past is no longer present in daily Canadian society, so Sikhs and other minority group members do not need to stay so closely connected to their racial group for protection or security. Sikhs are under a great deal of pressure to remain attached to their community, and this pressure may be even greater for those who call themselves orthodox Sikhs. In the 1990s, several Sikh males in Toronto, who felt obligated and pressured by their families to wear turbans, committed suicide in an act of defiance (O’Connell, 2000, p. 207).

With religion at the center of Sikhism, what identity can be attributed to Sikhs who do not read, write, or understand the scriptures of their religion? As Ghuman (1994a) asks, “are they Canadians, Indians, Indo-Canadians or” (p.230)? A major problem for Indian children born and raised in host societies is that “while the first generation in the Diaspora looks for community ties, the second and subsequent generation(s) find such ties restrictive of their choices” (Raj, 2008, p.13).

Within the Sikh home, problems begin to arise when the young children enter high school because high school may signal the breaking point between first and second generation Sikhs. Many East Indian parents still require that their children adhere to the traditional codes of the Punjabi culture. Most notably, arranged marriages are still common among Punjabi singles. A noticeable difference is that singles have more freedom to decide if they will or will not pursue the marriage partner chosen by their parents. In the past, young people were not given a choice. These rules apply to varying extents based on the particular household as well as gender. A “gendered double standard” exists whereby girls are still the subjugated gender and often are pressured to follow the traditional lifestyle (Gigi-Durham, 2004, p. 144). Males often enjoy a greater autonomy.

The Punjabi family structure is a regimented patriarchal hierarchy that gives young men preference and authority over family decisions. Increasingly, families find themselves in great interfamily conflict if they choose to apply cultural dating regulations to their second-generation Canadian children. Punjabi male dominance is granted as a birthright (Roy, 2008), and so males are given more freedom to conduct their own affairs. By their teenage years, the decisions of young males can outweigh those of their mothers. In big family decisions, such as the purchase of a vehicle, second generation young males have a greater say than both their parents.

Punjabi parents in India have been socialized to remain distant from the administration of their children’s educational experience. They transfer this way of thinking to Canada where “South Asian immigrant parents, for the most part, have had minimal experience in, or familiarity with, western higher education, making for minimal

parental guidance” (Sandhu & Nayar, 2008, p. 35). In addition, Punjabi parents might ask Canadian teachers for advice about parenting their children at home. A University of British Columbia (UBC) study found that Punjabi parents in British Columbia would sometimes ask teachers to intervene in their child’s home behaviour: “A parent might ask the teacher to tell their child not to watch so much TV at home, or in the case of the preschool aged student, to tell the child not to drink coke for breakfast” (Johnson & Siemens, 2006, p. 5). The researchers also found that parents were hesitant to become involved in any classrooms matters, especially those of a leadership role. Sikh parents have difficulty in providing guidance to their children because “some first generation Sikhs have been limited to mainly learning facts by rote without necessarily having been exposed to critical inquiry” (Sandhu & Nayar, 2008, p. 36). Nayar (2004) argues that a cultural incongruence develops as result of the traditional Eastern practice of orally transmitting wisdom verses the Western analytical approach.

Historically, Punjabi parents have taken a back seat in addressing the negative school behaviour of their sons, even when they are asked to participate. These parents have little or no experience with attending to, or empathizing with, the personal challenges that their children may have to endure through school and adolescence. Some Indo-Canadian parents are uncomfortable “aiding with classroom activities, or working with their child on literacy activities at home. From their perspective, that domain belongs to the school” (Johnson & Siemens, 2006, p. 5).

Educational attainment is a source of family pride (Sandhu & Nayar, 2008). Many parents expect their children to prosper with their education, even if the parents are unable to assist with their schoolwork or to be involved in their school activities. Many

students who excel in secondary and post-secondary education believe that their success is necessary to improve their family's social standing (Bhattacharya, 2000). Thus, first generation Sikh parents feel obligated to financially fund their children's advanced education.

This considerable pressure to improve the social standing of the family and maintain family pride is a great source of stress for South Asian students, especially young males. These students feel obligated to do well in school and university, to be high academic achievers, but also are frustrated when their family does not help them to deal with obstacles and challenges associated with acquiring a good education. When support is lacking at home, these students seek guidance from outside sources, and at times, their male peers fill the parental void. Sometimes, peer associations may not be the most suitable source of instruction.

Belonging

Since the early 1990s, a deviant sub-culture has been emerging in the Indo-Canadian community. Indo-Canadian males have been implicated in massive street gang and organized crime activities. Since the mid 1990s, well over 100 men of South Asian, mostly Sikh, descent have been murdered in gang-related homicides in Canada (Assisi, 2008). Most of the killings occurred due to gang disputes in and around the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Most of these murders remain unsolved. Peculiarly, most of these implicated and deceased Sikh men came from middle to upper-middle class families with deep rooted ties to the Sikh pioneers of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

The criminal element has worked its way into the minds and mainstream of Indo-Canadians in B.C. Crime—the drug culture and gangs—have found a home in the

consciousness and sub-consciousness of many young East Indian high school males. Recently, Dilsher Gill and Joseph Randay, two high school males from W. J. Mouwat Secondary School, made headlines that were all too familiar. These two seemingly well-integrated and sociable grade 12 males were leading a double life. These two Indo-Canadians from intact families were selling drugs for a violent organized crime group. Sadly, they were kidnapped and murdered just weeks before they were to graduate from high school (Bolan, 2009).

The consumption of harmful substances is a major epidemic in the Indo-Canadian community (Weber, 1996). Alcohol use and abuse are to blame for major health concerns specific to this community, including a disproportionate rate of diabetes (Johnson et. al., 2006). Alcohol and other harmful substances are introduced to East Indian males at an early age, usually the early teens. In part, this early introduction to harmful substances is encouraged by the irresponsible drinking example set by the preceding male generation. Also, teenage East Indian males commonly commingle with males in their early twenties, so they can easily acquire alcohol and illegal substances from these older male peers. Over time, these negative associations and illegal activities can develop into patterns of misbehaviour and criminal activity.

Perhaps the most frightening and problematic issue in the Indo-Canadian Sikh community is the wall of silence. This dangerous code of silence is the by-product of *izzat*, saving face (Gigi-Durham, 2004). Actions that may not be regarded as shameful from a Western perspective are commonly emphasized in the Punjabi culture as being shameful. For example, pre-marital sexual relations are frowned upon by the Punjabi arranged-marriage culture. Likewise, acts of delinquency in school or in the community

also are a serious source of shame. A child who misbehaves in school or outside of school is regarded as a troubled child who will not succeed. In the Punjabi culture, every shameful action is highly dramatized and perceived as extreme.

Young Indo-Canadians represent the first generation of Punjabis to be born outside of the Punjab. Their experiences and comprehension of their Eastern history needs to be funnelled through their own reality of life in the West. This generation is simultaneously processing and learning two cultures. Even though one generation holds a monetary and sentimental bond with its homeland, the children of that generation may not share the same sentiments (Ghuman, 1994a). Second generation Sikhs are a unique group with unique problems. For example, since the mid 1990s, an unprecedented number of Sikh youth have been murdered in British Columbia, in drug gang related violence (Tyakoff, 2004). Second generation East Indian males are often unguided by the preceding male generation because of the different experiences of growing up in two different countries.

With respect to education, they are not always guided by their parents, and without guidance, it is difficult to know where to turn. Personally, I only visited my own high school career counsellor once in grade 12 because it was mandatory. This is not to say that I did not need his advice; in fact, I did need his help because I was confused about my future direction. I lacked realizable goals, and I was completely unsure of where to begin planning for my future. I remained confused after the first visit, and thought it was a waste of time. I was so lost that I became despondent, and did not see any value in going back for another session.

I was not alone in facing this problem, which still continues to impact young Indo-Canadian high school males today. In fact, the research suggests that problems begin much earlier than grade twelve in the middle years of high school. Studies have shown that males become apathetic by the seventh and eighth grade, which leads to disruptive behaviour (Gentry & Peelle, 1994). Teachers may perceive these young men as undesirable elements in their classrooms and in school in general (Davis, 2006), and some of these young men may find a different kind of encouragement outside of school.

Summary

The current research is lacking; a great need still exists to identify the youth of the Sikh Diaspora who have not taken on the prescribed identity roles that historically have been successful for Sikhs dealing with diaspora conditions. Many questions still need to be answered. The literature review performed in this present study analyzes only a fraction of a much larger phenomenon.

In this literature review, I examined some of the factors that contribute to the educational identity of second generation East Indians in B.C high schools to show how their life experiences differ from those of first generation Indo-Canadians. I also am concerned with understanding how the values of first generation Indo-Canadians cannot be passed to second generation East Indian young males as effortlessly as this was done over previous generations. Significantly, previous generations of Punjabi Sikhs were not diasporic communities. Today, Sikhs in the West must confront a dichotomous identity as they try to maintain their Eastern Punjabi Sikh culture while being exposed to, and growing familiar with, the culture of their host state.

In this chapter, I also presented the post-traditionalist framework that I use to analyze my data. This theory examines the dichotomy of identifying with two cultures. Specifically, with respect to post-traditionalist theory, I discussed the “late modern society” and the “self reflexive” individual (Giddens, 1991). I also described the “post modern subject” (Hall, 1996) as another way to understand identity formation. The theory of acculturation (Berry, 1997), which I also rely on, is used to conceptualize culture. In this chapter, I discussed the major themes of self-identity, culture, religion, and belonging. For the purposes of my research, I view identity as shifting, unstable, and malleable; for example, in school, students are influenced by their interactions with authority and their exposure to popular culture (Yon, 2000). Students are continually redefining their identity through a process of negotiation. I also understand that globalization and migration inevitably challenge fixed and essentialized identities. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology that I used, and the methods that I employed to carry out the research study.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I introduce my research methodology, interpretive paradigm, research questions and describe my role in collecting the research data. I also outline my data collection process in various high schools in four large cities in the lower mainland of British Columbia. I discuss my role as a researcher and introduce my seven research participants. I explain the rationale I used to choose the research methods for this qualitative study.

I examine the experiences of young Sikh males from high schools in four British Columbia cities in the hope of better understanding the complexities of their identities as students and members of the second generation Sikh diaspora. The following dialog is an excerpt from my data:

Jaime: *College? I just wanna (sic) graduate, man!*
(Jaime, personal interview, January 11, 2009)

Kenny: *My parents want me to be a lawyer, so I guess I will be a lawyer [...] I'm like, like not thinking about it, right. I just say ya, okay, to my parents, so they leave me alone, you know (chuckles). So that's the only thing I ever thought about doing, right. But I don't really know. I don't, you know, think about university. I play soccer right, and that's more like what I wanna do. But you know, I will say lawyer because my cousin is becoming a lawyer and my parents, my mom more, keeps telling me that I should be a lawyer.*
(Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008)

Ray: *Uh, seriously, I have no idea? I can't answer that because I don't know.*
(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

Ajinder: *If I gotta say something right now, it'd probably be like business. My brother did finance at UBC and he got a really good job. He's like the smartest guy I know, and uh, you know, he could help me.*
(Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2009)

In the preceding conversation, *sic* indicates that a word that may appear strange or incorrect has been written intentionally or has been quoted verbatim. Since I have

recorded the language of all the interview quotations verbatim to retain their authenticity, originality, and spontaneity, from this point forward, I will not use *sic* again.

Despite any appearance of varied responses, the range of participant response was narrow and similar. Generally unable to envision their futures, the participants struggled to hypothetically describe their long-term aspirations. For example, Kenny felt inclined to provide me with his parent's best answer. Ajinder responded with an answer that appeared realistically tangible based on his brother's achievements. Ray clearly struggled, and failed to provide an answer.

Methodology

I aim to understand the educational identity of second generation Sikh males in British Columbia (B.C) high schools. My research follows a social-constructivist epistemology that perceives identity as a process of production. My method for understanding identity is interpretivist, meaning that "the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants" (Bryman, 2008, p. 366). To make sense of the context or situation being studied, I use postmodern theory. Postmodern theorists also argues that identity is fluid and malleable, and in constant negotiation. Self-identity is the product of renegotiating interactions with people and institutions (Hall, 1996; Giddens, 1991). I also draws on the Social Constructivist interpretation that seeks to comprehend how actors (participants) share an understanding of the social world. These shared understandings are derived when actors interact with the social world (Schwandt, 1997). I seek to understand the lived experiences of individuals who have undergone a particular, similar experience (Lichtman, 2006).

I was initially surprised, as I quickly realized that Canadian educational studies research was sorely lacking as to the experiences of Sikh high school males. Undoubtedly, this need to create knowledge was imperative to conducting a qualitative study: “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings that people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). My study is a collective case study that aims to understand a contemporary phenomenological situation within its real life context (Yin, 2003). I have chosen this particular type of study because it can be used to initiate research in situations where previous research is lacking (Eisenhardt, 2002). By conducting a collective case study, in which a series of individual cases form a collection, I believe that the collective understanding “will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 2005, p. 446).

My case study research relies on my participants’ perceptions of the situation. I accomplish this goal by using open-ended questions, which allow me to listen carefully to what my participants say or do in their life settings. In this process, the researcher must set aside his own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study. By talking to my teenaged participants, I am able to uncover knowledge and information that could only be obtained from an insider. My teenage participants are insiders in that they are living the phenomenon I want to study. Even though I also am a second generation Sikh male, my experiences as a high school student may be personally biased or inaccurate due to the time that has lapsed since I graduated from high school. Also, these teenage males may experience an entirely different set of emotions, understandings, or integration than I did. Their societal and cultural positions may be different based

simply on the lapse of time and the societal changes that a different time engenders. For example, my personal belief remains that in the 1990s, a high degree of racist sentiment was directed towards minority group members. Since many of my participants attended high schools where the majority of the student body is East Indian, racism may not be as apparent or prevalent for them.

These teenage participants are insiders to the diaspora experience and to the educational system. They can provide the “natives” point of view (Geertz, 1983). I obtained this personal insider knowledge by conducting in-depth, one-on-one interviews. The following excerpt is an example of insider information that may be a singular and isolated incident. Since this student was the focus of many disciplinary interventions by the school administration, he was the only participant who could shed light on the personal affects of high school disciplinary action.

Amandeep: *Do you feel like the principal singles you out?*

Ray: *Well no, its like uh, not just me, but like Apnas. She's brown and uh, she is like always extra hard on Apna guys. I don't know what's up with her? She don't say nothing to good kids, but if you like get on her bad side, then she messes with you all the time. Stays on your back and is extra hard compared to (other V.P.). She ain't even supposed to be my vice principal, you know. Like, uh, my last name means that I should be with (other V.P.). Ya, but whenever I have to go to the office for whatever, I always have to see her.*

(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

Research questions

Certainly, my own experiences with education have made me think about the lived educational experiences of other young Indo-Canadian males. For example, I had a great deal of difficulty focusing on tasks. More importantly, I had difficulty setting goals and was relatively unaware of the opportunities beyond high school. I was unable or

unprepared to access educational assistance and was often on my own when interpreting interactions with other people and the institutions of the larger Canadian society. I wanted to know if these young men were facing similar dilemmas.

Through in-depth, focused, and informal interviews, I examined how these young men made sense of the worlds in which they live. My main goal is to understand the main difficulties faced by the Indo-Canadian youth of today. Therefore, I aim to understand their situation by asking the following research questions:

- (1) What are the student's defined goals and what motivates these goals?
- (2) What pressures and expectations do these students face? How have these pressures and expectations defined their identity?
- (3) With respect to belonging, how do the participants describe their peer groups and role models?
- (4) What is the role of parents/family in the education of my participants?

Background and role of researcher

I recruited seven young Indo-Canadian high school males for the study. I identified and choose the participants by using informal networks such as friends. I contacted my friends and discussed my proposed thesis and then asked them to suggest candidates who fulfilled the basic demographic criteria of my proposal. The basic criteria that I discussed with them were age, gender, second generation status, current high school enrolment, and East Indian Sikh background. Then, my friends contacted the potential participants to ask them if I could contact them individually. I made it clear to my friends that they had no obligation to actively produce participants for my study, and that disinterested potential participants should not be pressed to become involved. A number

of my friends did not, or were unable, to respond to my request, and a number of potential participants immediately refused and were not reproached for their refusal. My friends provided me with the phone numbers of potential interested participants.

I use an inductive, open-problem inquiry format to elicit the agreed-upon and voluntary participation of my participants. I did not want to pressure the participants to divulge any information with which they felt uncomfortable. Instead, I routinely asked them if they wanted to elaborate on the particulars of the discussion. By asking them if they wanted to continue, I believe that they felt comfortable and in control of the information that they provided. This level of comfort resulted in thick descriptive dialogue as illustrated by the following exchange:

Exchange 1: Parents

In the proceeding exchange, Jacob and I discuss his parents and school bullying.

Jacob

Amandeep: *Do you wanna tell me why you didn't ask your dad for help when you were bullied?*

Jacob: *You know, he gets mad if I have problems at school (pause) Okay, I told him once and he talked to the bully guy's dad. I told him not to say anything but he talked to his dad right away [...] the guy didn't stop buggin me. My dad only made it worse.*

(Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2008)

I conducted individual, open-ended, audio-recorded face-to-face and telephone interviews. I also collected data by using handwritten notes. I informed each participant about the nature as well as purpose of the study. I obtained verbal and written consent from each participant as well as from their parent/guardian. I spoke to each participant's parent/guardian individually.

I audio-recorded all of the interviews using a digital voice recorder, (IC). I interviewed the seven participants over three sessions of approximately 30 to 90 minutes each. Our first and second sessions were face-to-face, and our third session was a telephone interview in which I contacted each participant briefly by telephone in July 2009. In a 10 minute follow-up, I obtained the participants' final grades from their completed year of study, 2008/2009. I conducted all of the interviews in English.

In the first interview, I asked very general open-ended questions. In the second interview, I asked very specific questions that arose from our first interview. This strategy not only allowed me to ask follow-up questions but also enabled me to build trust and uncover sensitive, yet important background information in the second interview. The following excerpts illustrate the nature of the first and second face-to-face interviews:

First Face-to-face Interview:

Amandeep: *What do you do for fun outside of school?*

Ray: *Sit back, talk, chill with older guys.*
(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

Second Face-to-face Interview:

Amandeep: *Do you mind if I ask you about your friends? Do some of the older guys you told me you hang out with ever get into trouble with the police and stuff?*

Ray: *Well uh Ya. Some of them have been in trouble, been to court (criminal).*
(Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009)

I attempted to ensure that the participants did not feel pressured to answer any questions that they may have found uncomfortable. For example, the next exchange

(done in early January 2009) illustrates the exact wording I used when approaching sensitive subject matter:

Amandeep: *If you feel comfortable, would you like to tell me why you were suspended from school?*

Jaime: *I don't wanna say, is that okay with you man?*
(Jaime, personal interview, January 11, 2009)

Amandeep: *Ya, no problem. We have lots of other things we can talk about.*

Often, I would share some of my own experiences with the participants. I used this openness and self-disclosure as a strategy to gain trust. I also shared my experiences to clarify my questions and solicit answers by way of example. For example, I told Tejpal a story of my own mischievous adventure in high school, which concerned being disciplined by my vice principal. I told him that the experience made me feel isolated from my peers.

I shared with Ray that I had felt isolated and was labelled as troublesome and bad news after this incident in high school. Although Ray did not feel comfortable sharing with me the exact incident that resulted in his suspension, he was comfortable telling me that he had been disciplined at school. These types of exchanges developed into open lines of communication between myself and the participants.

I also asked the participants to clarify their answers. I did not want to presuppose that I understood their responses based solely on my own knowledge. I also thought it was important to ensure that I did not make any assumptions based on our similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In other words, I want to focus on the participants' individual voices rather than my own. For example, based on my own experience, I would have presupposed that the grandparents that lived in the same house as Ray were his dad's

parents—Dadka. In fact, after asking for him for clarification, I was told that he lived with his mother's parents—Nanka.

Participants

All of my participants were high school students between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, and all of them were Indo-Canadian youth of the Sikh religion. All the participants aligned themselves with moderate Sikhism. Moderate members of Sikhism are not baptized, and are considered unorthodox because they do not maintain the five Sikh symbols—especially the wearing of a turban and the maintenance of uncut hair (Nayar, 2008). Politically, moderate Sikhs may still practice the fundamental principles prescribed by Sikh religious scripture and doctrine. None of my participants were regularly involved in practicing their religion. Only one was a vegan—a Sikh practice that is religiously prescribed—and his choice was religiously motivated. The other participants aligned themselves with Sikhism by way of their family's association: "I am Sikh because my family is Sikh (Tejpal)."

All the participants reported that they attended church with their family only to commemorate special occasions, such as weddings or New Years celebrations. None of them read, meditated, or practiced the teachings of the Sikh holy bible. None of them attended church or sought religious/spiritual guidance by way of self-motivation. For example, the following exchange illustrates how infrequently Jaime attends church. It also alludes to his disconnection with his religion because of his inability to comprehend the language of the religious text and sermons.

Amandeep: *When was the last time you went to the Gurdwarda (Sikh church)?*

Jaime: *Uh, while ago man. Uh, let me see? Uh, my friend's sister got married,*

so I showed up.

Amandeep: *You went to the wedding to celebrate the religious aspect of a Sikh marriage ceremony?*

Jaime: *Huh? Ah, no man, I just went cause my friend told me to come, and so I went.*

Amandeep: *Did you understand or like uhm appreciate what the Gianni (Preacher) was saying when he was conducting the ceremony?*

Jaime: *(laughing) No. I don't understand that shit man. I dunno what they're sayin.*

(Jaime, personal interview, November 19, 2009)

At home, the participant's parents communicated with them in the Punjabi language, and the participants mostly replied in simple English. By simple, I mean that they would reply with one word answers such as "Yes" or "No" or by short sentences. All of the parents had a workable knowledge of English from their daily lived experiences. Some of the parents were fluent in both English and Punjabi, but all of the parents understood enough English to maintain their jobs and accomplish their daily chores, including shopping, banking, and paying the bills. With respect to language use, the participants were almost in the exact opposite position to their parents. The participants understand their parents' Punjabi, but they respond to them in English. The following excerpt is a common exchange between a Indo-Canadian parent and their child; the parent communicates in Punjabi and the child replies in English:

Exchange 2: Language at Home

Parent: *"Roti kania?" (Would you like to eat dinner?)*

Child: *"No, not hungry."*

Next, I briefly discuss each of the seven participants of my study in descending order, beginning with the initial interview. These brief biographies serve to introduce the participants in the context in which I came to know them. Previously, I mentioned two of the four cities in which I conducted the research. In the following participant biographies, I do not name the cities associated with them to further ensure the anonymity of their identities, especially considering their young age. I also maintain the anonymity of the schools involved in this study. In total, I enlisted seven participants from five different high schools.

Dave.

Before I conducted this study, I met Dave on several occasions. Although we have had little personal interaction, we mutually know each other through a third party. Dave's father is my friend's older brother. Hence, my friend, who also is Dave's uncle, arranged our meeting. I spoke to Dave and his father in person in October 2008. Dave's father was extremely concerned about privacy; I reassured him, and after our conversation, he agreed to sign the consent form. Dave was nonchalant and agreed to participate. I interviewed Dave a few days later.

Dave is a 15 year old grade 10 student. He has a dominant physical body. It is easy to see how he is often mistaken as being older. He self-described himself as an "average student, but could do better." He has been on the honour roll once in high school. His favourite teacher is his male gym teacher, and his favourite class is gym. He is uncertain about his future direction, yet he has some preliminary life goals beyond high school.

Dave's parents are in their forties. Dave's father immigrated to Canada at a young age, and Dave's mother immigrated to Canada in her early twenties. Dave's father completed grade 10 in British Columbia, and his mother graduated from high school in India. His parents had an arranged marriage. They are both employed and have four children. Dave's grandmother also resides with the family. Dave's parents expressed their desire that their son excel at education. Dave often turns to his two older sisters for educational support, describing them as good students. His oldest sister is in college, and his other sister is a reoccurring honour-roll student at the same high school that Dave attends.

Kenny.

Kenny is a grade 10 student. At the age of 15, he is the oldest of three children. I met Kenny through a friend of my wife. My wife had contacted and discussed my proposed study with a friend on Facebook (a social networking Website). Her friend suggested her nephew Kenny as a potential participant. I contacted Kenny and arranged to meet him and his parents in November, 2008. Kenny's parents were very excited about the study and wanted to help me enlist other kids from Kenny's age group. In fact, they arranged for Ray to participate in my study.

Kenny's parents are active in Kenny's education. I found them to be the most proactive parents among all the study participants. In addition to being involved in Kenny's education, they actively participate in his extracurricular sporting activities. Kenny's household consists of his grandparents (who are retired), parents, and two siblings. Kenny is the centre of attention in that house. The entire family watches his sports games and accompanies him on sports road trips around the lower mainland of B.C.

Kenny's parents were born in India but came to Canada at a very young age. They both graduated from high school and met while attending college in B.C. They fell in love and got married in their early twenties. They withdrew from college before completing their programs. Kenny's father is employed outside of the home, and his mother runs a home-based business. Kenny has a girlfriend, but he is not allowed to be alone with her in his bedroom or on a date. His parents stipulate that they must be among other friends and spend time in group settings, rather than alone.

Kenny has changed schools more than once since grade eight. The first move occurred because his family purchased a new home in a different area of the city. When I met Kenny, he was attending a private school. When I interviewed him, he was at a sports-oriented school that mandated extra time each day for sports-related instruction and practice. At his favourite sport, Kenny is one of the top Canadian athletes in his age group.

Before attending private school, Kenny attended a French immersion school. He felt an unfair disadvantage studying in French and asked his parents to transfer him to the sports school. His parents agreed to move him and generally consider this change to be positive. They reasoned that his grades would improve in an English curriculum school, which also would help to improve his educational engagement by introducing sports as part of the school curriculum. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Kenny about his experience in the French immersion school:

Amandeep: *Tell me why the French program is unfair?*

Kenny: *It's hard. They expect everything handed in French. I would do way better in normal school. Science in French is too hard. Its like, whatever, unfair!*

(Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008)

Ray.

Ray is a 15 year old grade 10 student. I met him as a result of meeting Kenny and Kenny's parents. Kenny's parents thought that Ray could benefit from positive role models in his life, and discussed my research proposal with Ray and his parents. The parents have been friends, since their sons attended elementary school together. Ray's parents were supportive of my research proposal, even though initially, they did not speak with me personally. They are traditional parents who do not take a hands-on approach with their children's education.

Based on the information from Kenny's parents, they agreed to allow Ray to participate in the study. I spoke to Ray over the phone, and he agreed to participate in my research. I hand delivered the consent forms to Ray, and I briefly spoke to his mom at that time. Ray's mom is concerned that Ray is getting into trouble at school. She did not have any questions, since she had spoken to Kenny's parents and was familiar with the nature of my research. I left the consent form with them, under the impression that one of Ray's sisters would read it and further explain it to the parents. Ray has three older sisters. At the time of the first interview with Ray, he presented me with the signed consent forms.

Ray's parents are in their early fifties, and as mentioned, he has three older sisters. Two of them are college graduates, and the other currently is attending college. Ray, like one of my other participants, is the only son and the youngest child. In East Indian culture, a male child is important to carry the family name and honour. Since Ray is considerably younger than his sisters, he may have been conceived so the family would have a son, although I have no confirmation of my speculation.

I met Ray at the public library where he gave me the consent forms. I reread the forms with Ray to make sure that he understood his rights as a participant. Ray is very mature; he is a street-smart young man who associates with older high school males and young men who are older than high school age. Ray admits to being mischievous and to getting in trouble at school. He admits to being suspended on numerous occasions and finds it difficult to remain interested in school. He regularly leaves his homework undone, yet still manages to pass all of his courses.

His father has little to no interaction with Ray's school life. His mother is involved, but mostly with respect to disciplinary actions and meeting with school administrators when he gets in trouble. Ray admits to not listening to or caring about his sisters' opinions, despite his acknowledgement that they are good role models. Ray often expresses an uncertainty about his future plans: "If I have to pick a life goal, uh, I seriously don't know [...] Educational goal? Uh, my goal is to pass [...] my goal is to graduate, but who knows if I will." (Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

Jaime.

Jaime is a 15 year old grade 10 student. I have known him for a number of years, since he is a neighbour of my aunt and uncle. His parents are close friends of my aunt and uncle. I approached his parents with my research proposal, and I was granted permission to proceed, so long as Jaime agreed to participate. Jaime was more than willing to participate and even solicited one of his friends, Tejpal, for my study. Jaime is the youngest of four children.

He is the only son and has three older sisters. Although all his sisters have graduated from high school, none of them pursued post secondary education. Jaime's

parents tried desperately to have a son, and finally Jaime was born. This information was provided by my aunt who has remained close friends with Jaime's parents for nearly two decades.

Jaime attends a public school highly populated by Indo-Canadians in a primarily Indo-Canadian neighbourhood. Many B.C. neighbourhoods are predominantly one minority race. Accordingly, the schools in those communities represent the demographics of the neighbourhood. Jaime admits to spending "too much time playing video games." He is relatively unsupervised when doing his homework. He passes his classes and has never been in trouble in high school. He maintains that he is popular with his many friends from all types of backgrounds.

Jaime is a very down-to-earth and friendly young man. He is honest and humorous and can speak on fancy exotic cars for hours on end. He has no future plans and contends that he does not talk about school or the future with his family or friends. He does not feel pressured about school from his parents. He has many positive male influences and cousins, and they help to keep him out of trouble by instructing and watching over him.

His parents are both employed full-time. His father has a workable knowledge of English, and is a self-employed businessman who deals with the Indo-Canadian community. Jaime is materialistic and is regularly updating his video games, cell phone, and clothing. He is unemployed, but is financially spoiled by his parents and three employed older sisters.

Ajinder.

Ajinder is a 15 year old tenth grader. My wife also helped me to meet this young Indo-Canadian high school student. In the past, my wife worked as a teacher in British Columbia, and she maintains a frequent relationship with many teachers and friends through social networking Websites and email. A friend and former teaching associate of my wife enlisted the support of her own distant cousin, Ajinder. Ajinder comes from an educationally enriched home in which his two older siblings are both high-achieving students. His sister is a grade 12 honour roll student, and his brother is a gainfully employed University of British Columbia (UBC) graduate.

Unlike some of their Western-Anglo counterparts, immigrant children cannot always turn to their parents for educational support. In some cases, they have older siblings who are willing to share their educational experience and who also are great students. These older siblings often teach their younger brothers or sisters the knowledge that they acquired during the day at school. From an early age, Ajinder recalls that education was the main topic at home. Between soccer and school, Ajinder is preoccupied with high achievement. He definitely has shown that he is a self-motivated high achiever.

Ajinder lives in a non-Indo-Canadian community but attends a school in a district with “60 – 70 percent Indo Canadians.” He describes his relationship with his parents as trusting. With respect to education, he feels little pressure, but he also understands that his parents expect high academic results. Ajinder has been an honour-roll student for many years. At the time of our interview, he was succeeding at advanced Math.

Tejpal.

Tejpal was solicited by Jaime. They have resided in the same neighbourhood for most of their youth. I had never met Tejpal, but he has lived close to my aunt and uncle for many years. Tejpal is 14 years old and in the ninth grade. He has a younger sister. His parents were relatively young compared to most of the parents of my participants. They also were the most recent to immigrate to Canada. Tejpal's dad wears a turban and keeps a beard, and his grandparents also reside in the house. Tejpal's dad is professionally employed; he has some university training acquired in India.

Tejpal's parents were happy to participate in my research, even though they seldom partake in his school life or school-related activities. When he was in the early grades, at most once a year, they would go to the school to meet his teachers. Since he started high school, they never have visited Tejpal's school or met his teachers. They were interested in my research because it finally gave them an outlet through which they could comfortably communicate with an educator. Tejpal's mother is the primary home support for the children, although her English-speaking skills are poor, and she has an admitted fear of Canadian schools and institutions. To explain my research and background, I spoke to his parents for nearly twenty minutes.

Tejpal also attends a primarily Indo-Canadian school. He wants to be a good role model for his younger sister and has "always had a 'B' average or better in school." His parents are unable to assist him with his homework, although he feels that their help is really unnecessary. Tejpal is a completely bilingual speaker in English and Punjabi. He usually tries to complete his homework at school and finishes any remaining work in the afternoon at home before he leaves to do other things. He has never been late with, or

unable to submit, an assignment. Tejpal is unsure about his future direction but sure that it will include post-secondary education. He even commented about his interest in Engineering. His parents also want him to pursue a post-secondary education, although they do not pressure him about any particular discipline.

Jacob.

Jacob was the youngest participant involved in my research study. He is a 13 year old grade eight student. Initially, I did not consider involving grade eight students in my research, but due to the insistence of his father, I included Jacob in my research. In the past, Jacob's family lived in my home community, and I have known his father, a few years my senior, since the late 1990s. In early November 2008, I spoke to him at a religious function, and he insisted that I include his son in my study because he was worried that Jacob was detaching from his family.

Jacob's parents are very involved in his home and social life. He has strict restrictions on the distances he can travel on his bike, and also has an early evening curfew. Jacob's mom is a stay-at-home mother. She drives Jacob and his sibling to and from school and extracurricular activities. Jacob's dad is self-employed, and Jacob and his brother both contribute to the family business on weekends and some evenings.

Grades are very important to Jacob's parents, although they are unable to assist him with his homework in high school. An older female cousin who frequently visits the family assists Jacob with his school work, and sometimes, Jacob visits her to get her help. Jacob has improved his academic performance through the sixth and seventh grade, and when he brings home a good report card, his parents show they are proud of him by rewarding him with gifts and monetary incentives.

Jacob is somewhat similar and somewhat dissimilar to the other males in this study. He plays street hockey, video games, organized sports, and rides motorcycles. Progressively, he has become detached from his family. Unlike in previous years, he spends far more hours watching television, or alone in the family's game room. This concern about Jacob's detachment motivated his father to want me to include Jacob in my research. His father wanted to know why recently Jacob has become so detached, and I agreed to include him because I thought that his unique personality traits, not shared by the other participants, would be a positive contribution to my study.

Through the course of our interviews, Jacob revealed that he is a victim of bullying. His high school experience has been marred by verbal and even physical assaults. This bullying is threatening his safety and overshadowing his ability to focus on enjoying high school.

Methods

In this section, I present the process and timeline of data collection. I also discuss the rationale for the methods I have chosen.

Data Collection Process

The Fraser Valley area of B.C., the geographical location where I recruited and conducted the participant interviews, stretches to include major cities such as Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Delta, Abbotsford, Burnaby, and my hometown of Mission. In October 2008, I began to utilize my social network to gain access to and recruit my study participants. I contacted several friends by email and telephone who had young high

school aged males within their social circles. Some of my friends have younger brothers, nephews, and neighbours, and they also know males who they coach or mentor.

My wife was instrumental in assisting me. Her assistance directly secured at least two of the seven participants who participated in this study. My wife is a former teacher in one of B.C.'s most populated Sikh cities. Through her own education at UBC and short teaching term, she was able to help me get into contact with several potential participants by directly contacted and soliciting the help of her colleagues and friends.

I explained that I wanted to understand the student's point of view regarding both the positive and negative aspects of their education. I described how I had come to believe that such a study would result in an understanding of the problems of this particular group of young males, and possibly suggest solutions that could encourage academic success for Indo-Canadian males. I told my social network that the aim of my project was not to isolate and humiliate the young participants; instead, the participants would provide information that could be valuable to future generations of young Indo-Canadian high school males. By November, 2008, I had recruited seven participants who all completed the entire study, and their data is the basis of my field research. I collected data over three interviews with each participant. The first two interviews were face-to-face in November 2008 and January 2009, and the final interview was over the phone in July 2009.

Rationale for Methods

I conducted individual face-to-face interviews to build the trust of my participants. I believe that a face-to-face interview allows for a greater exchange between the participant and the researcher. I believe that this process contributes to better data

collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. During this process, I relied on, for the most part, my own intuitions and personal judgment to synthesize the incoming information and to set the pace of the interview. This strategy enabled me to construct relevant and accurate findings. If I had not built the trust of my participants through these personal face-to-face interviews, I believe that my findings may not have been as reliable or accurate.

I believe that face-to-face interviews allow a researcher both to analyze the explicit content of the participant's words and to deconstruct the unsaid aspects of the interview. Conducting face-to-face interviews with my seven young participants enabled me to build a rapport with them, especially since they could appreciate that I understood their situations. Sharing personal stories and humour made us feel like peers, rather than an interviewer and interviewee. For example, we joked about being nervous when first calling girls during high school.

As well, this strategy gave the parents an opportunity to speak with me and to gain trust in what to them was a foreign process of academic research studies. Ensuring the confidentiality of their children was important. For some parents, it also was important to finally feel involved in their child's educational betterment. I provided a bilingual voice that they may not have had with their child's teachers over the years. The process was a mutually rewarding experience.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the methodology of my research study. I also described my research questions, discussed my role as a researcher, and provided the relevant information about my seven research participants. Next, I described the data

collection process and gave my rationale for the methods I used. In the next chapter, I present my data and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Data and Data Analysis

In this chapter, I present data that I collected through interviews with seven participants based on their answers to the following four questions: (1) What are your defined goals and what motivates you to achieve these goals? (2) What pressures and expectations do you face, and how have these pressures and expectations defined your educational identity? (3) With respect to belonging, how do you describe your peer groups and role models? (4) What role does your parents/family play in your education? I conclude the chapter by presenting seven recurring themes that emerged from the data; boredom, teacher assistance, sibling involvement, parental roles, punishment, image and belonging.

To interpret my data and discuss my analysis, I use a post traditional theoretical framework that posits that individuals are free agents in the creation of their own identity. This theory suggests that when an individual creates their own identity, their daily social interactions are more influential than traditional prescribed identity roles. Identity construction is structurally constrained by family, school, and in the case of the participants of this present study, by the cultural norms of both East and West. The data that I present provides an understanding of my participant's daily social interactions and the structural constraints that they encounter. The data analysis shows how my participants are constantly negotiating their perceived and idealized identities, namely a "self reflexive" (Hall, 1996) construction, which is the basis of their contemporary identity. Self reflexive identity is the construct of identity through daily relations and interactions with an individual to larger society.

Goals and Motivation

I asked the participants about their academic, extracurricular, and life goals. Do you have clear goals? Does any one goal (academic, extracurricular, or life), take precedence in your mind, and if so, why? Are you able to set and reach your goals? Who helps you to set and reach your goals? What or who motivates you? The responses were varied. The participants discussed both their social and educational ambitions. Their responses also showed that higher achieving students used goal setting strategies, but lower achieving students characteristically did not set any goals for themselves. For the majority of my participants, long-term planning meant planning for the following year, as is illustrated in the following conversational exchanges.

Exchange 1: Prioritizing.

In the proceeding exchange, Dave and I discuss prioritizing.

Dave

Amandeep: *Do you play sports at school? Are you on any teams?*

Dave: *I stopped playing this year.*

Amandeep: *Why?*

Dave: *To get better marks.*

Amandeep: *Why did you have to drop football to get better marks?*

Dave: *It's too hard to do both.*

Amandeep: *You know, teachers and coaches all understand and try to help players do both, right?*

Dave: *Well, Yah, I know. You're probably right. But uh, I couldn't do it. But, you know, next year, I know that I'm gonna do football. I am lazy and after football I would get too tired and fall asleep at 8 o'clock, then I couldn't do homework.*

Amandeep: *So how is that gonna change by next year?*

Dave: *I'm more confident and uh my goal is to get good grades now; then I can do both next year, but it's about being lazy, and I'm a little fat too. By next year I can do it.* (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008)

In the preceding exchange, Dave describes himself by using adjectives such as lazy and fat. According to his own perception of his marks, Dave is achieving above average; he is maintaining a B-average through grade 10. He appears motivated to excel at school and to return to football. He shows an ability to set short-term goals and prioritize the use of his time. This “self reflexive” behaviour indicates that Dave makes forward-thinking decisions. He wants to be a successful student and athlete. By the second semester, Dave was intermittently practicing with the school football team. He has “*already been placed on the roster of returning players*” for the 2009/2010 senior football season (Dave, telephone interview, July 9, 2009).

By taking a year off from sports, Dave now is able to complete his homework immediately after school. As Dave indicates in a later interview, immediately after school, he is “able to concentrate” and is not fatigued: “*I go home and study right away, like that's my trick*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). After he finishes high school, he wants to work in the medical field, although he is not sure about the exact extent of his involvement: “*I don't know what, but I want to be in the medical field*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). Already, Dave is mindful of university prerequisites and understands that “*next year I will have to do biology and chemistry*” (Dave, telephone interview, July 9, 2009). His course planning is a form of goal setting, and he understands that prerequisite science courses are necessary if he wants to pursue a career in the medical field.

Dave appears motivated to be successful: *“You gotta get it in your mind if you know wanna be successful. You know, you gotta get it in your mind, right, you gotta tell yourself, okay I gotta get this done or else it ain’t never gonna happen... I brainwashed myself”* (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). For Dave, success in the medical field is not determined by money or material items; instead, he wants *“to help people.”* He believes that helping someone with a *“broken leg or sickness”* will make him to feel good about himself.

Kenny

Kenny’s life goals are general and idealized. He envisions a scenic family picture that may be beyond his control when he says that his *“ultimate goal is to be well off, not struggling for money, having a happy life with a proper wife, kids, and a good family”* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Shortly after this interview, he told me that this goal is the same one that his grandparents want for him. At present, Kenny believes that he would be happy with *“enough money to buy pizza and stuff”* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). When I asked him to imagine himself in a career, he mentioned his parents’ belief that he would *“probably be a lawyer, cause my cousin Sam is becoming a lawyer, and my mom tells me I should become a lawyer”* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

If he is not an independent goal setter, he is aware and open to suggestions from “significant others,” family and friends whom he views as authority or role models. Under the advice of his cousin Sam, he has set a goal to do better in school: *“I didn’t think grades were important before, but Sam says grade 10 is important because it counts towards university”* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Kenny plans to

reach his goal to get better grades by “*paying more attention in class and doing more homework*” (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

Exchange 2: Goal setting

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss goal setting.

Ray

Amandeep: *What are your goals in school?*

Ray: *School is tough man. My goal is to pass, then graduate.*

Amandeep: *Do you set short-term goals that will help you reach the larger goals. Like, do you tell yourself that you will study for 45 minutes every night in order to pass or something like that?*

Ray: *No, I don't do that. I don't have short-term goals.*

Amandeep: *Do you have any long-term goals? Like what is your biggest dream?*

Ray: *Uh, seriously, I have no idea? I can't answer that because I don't know.*

Amandeep: *Have you ever sat down and thought about your goals or had someone, like your sisters, help you set goals?*

Ray: *No. They are busy with whatever they do.*

(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

This exchange reflects Ray's neglect of goal setting. Ray always has been an underachieving student, and he has never imagined anything more than just passing his current grade. Ray does not set educational goals, perhaps in part because he never has enjoyed educational success, and cannot understand the correlation between setting and reaching small goals in pursuit of larger goals. He is more concerned with momentary gratification than making an effort towards a future achievement. For example, Ray frequently skips school (is absent without excuse). He pursues the quick reward of

feeling free from “*boring school work*,” and does consider the correlation between absenteeism and poor marks.

Ray stands out from the others in my participant group because of his propensity to violate the school codes of conduct, such as skipping and failing to submit assigned work. This trouble could inevitably lead to him not completing high school, which is his only high school-related educational goal. After he was warned that his next infraction would result in his expulsion from the entire school district, Ray suggests “*that the principal always tries to scare me with that, she can’t do that ... you can’t kick someone out unless they do real crazy shit*” (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009).

If he is expelled, Ray believes that he can get a job that pays well, a job like “*roofing, or night shift at the Superstore (grocery store)*” (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009). Ray does not anticipate expulsion; in fact, he wants to go to college. He does not want to attend college to fulfill a career goal or personal aspiration. Instead, his motivation to attend college is to avoid “*a labour job like truck driving*” (Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008).

Jaime

Jaime is the most curious and inquisitive participant in my group. He is able to sit for hours watching an educational film or television broadcast on a topic that catches his attention. For example, Jamie explains how, if he finds a topic interesting, he explores it further on the internet: “*Seriously man, like in Socials, we learned about the Métis and I actually studied them on my own*” (Jamie, personal interview, November 19, 2008).

Although he does not have any long-term goals beyond high school, he does have an insatiable passion that potentially is an avenue for his future exploration. Jaime is an

avid automobile enthusiast, an interest that we both share, which is one aspect of our individual identities that we have in common. I would not be surprised if his passion for cars turns out to become a long-term career, since he tells me that he wants to understand *“everything about cars, like Mercedes or BMW, like uh, I want to find out how they get more power in the engines”* (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Although Jaime does not acknowledge that he has any educational goals, his comments suggest otherwise. For example, he claims to be improving his marks by working harder *“to get above average grades.”* He also comments that he has *“no other goals,”* which he follows with another explicit comment telling me that he may want *“to go to university, but I don’t know because I need better grades”* (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009). Although Jaime may not recognize it, his short-term goal is to achieve better grades, and one of his long-term educational goals definitely involve going to university. Jaime is certain about one of his goals: *“I just wanna [sic] graduate, man!”* (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009)

Tejpal

Tejpal has managed to earn *“some A’s, but mostly B’s and C’s”* throughout his first year of high school. He explains that *“school is too hard to get all A’s”* and that he is not interested in setting goals for school. He does not welcome simple changes to his study schedule, and he is content with studying *“one hour per week at home.”* Mostly, he is interested in enjoying his spare time and *“having fun.”* A common sentiment among the study participants, voiced by Tejpal, is that *“school isn’t interesting, school is boring and I’m not interested in the work”* (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2009).

Although Tejpal is not interested in setting short-term goals, he would like to attend university and study “*Engineering at UBC.*” The problem that many of the participants face, including Tejpal, is their inability to understand how to reach their educational goals, large or small. Tejpal does not have older siblings or friends to guide his course selection or encourage his progress: “*I really don’t know how to reach my goals. I don’t know how to become an Engineer. I mean, I haven’t even ever visited a counsellor. Anyways, I mean who cares*” (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2009).

Ajinder

Among my participant group, Ajinder stands out as an academic overachiever. He describes himself as “*smart, but people (his peers) don’t know I’m smart.*” He focuses on achieving straight A’s and spends “*an hour or so a day, well at least or more, doing homework*” (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2009). He considers himself to be one of the best grade 10 students in his school, and a straight A student “*since as long as I can remember.*” His strategy for getting top marks is to put extra effort into the classes that are the “*most boring.*” Although he is not completely certain about his future ambitions, he is contemplating attending the University of British Columbia (UBC) to earn a “*business degree.*”

He understands the process of earning a business degree because his older brother holds a business degree, “*and he can help me if I need it.*” To accomplish this goal, he understands that he needs to excel at Math while in high school. Ajinder seems to understand the steps that he must take to achieve a post secondary education. He is confident about reaching his goal to obtain a business degree “*because Math is important*

and I am real good at Math, I'm in advanced Math and I don't even try, well I try, but honestly it's so easy" (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2009).

Exchange 3: Dream job.

In the proceeding exchange, Jacob and I discuss his dream job.

Jacob

Amandeep: *What would you like to do with your life?*

Jacob: *Huh, I don't know I'm just a kid.*

Amandeep: *Ya, I know. But I mean, if you have, like a dream job or something, you can tell me.*

Jacob: *Well in that case it's different. Uh, I think that I uh, I want to be a mechanic.*

Amandeep: *That's pretty cool, seems like it would be lots of fun. I love cars and would love to know how to fix cars and machines. It's a good choice! [...] Do you know how to become a mechanic?*

Jacob: *Ya, you take applied skills and then you can get a job at Jiffy Lube after high school.*

(Jacob, personal interview, November 16, 2009).

In this exchange, Jacob honestly expresses the standpoint of many of the eighth graders that I have known. For him, high school is a new and foreign world beyond which he has not deeply thought about. He follows his preceding statements by telling me that he also wants to become “*a doctor, or dentist*” because his parents wish that for him. Jacob is still trying to find his place in high school among his peers, and he has encountered numerous obstacles in school. For example, he is noticeably short and overweight for his age group, and thus, he has become the victim of school bullies. This adversity has influenced his tendency to quickly react to the bullying. His plan is to gain the respect and admiration of his bullies by excelling at sports and school. He believes

that he will gain friends and admiration if he becomes a standout member of the student body.

Jacob's attempt to play on the basketball team, and become a team mate of the school bullies, produced the reverse affect, since his first attempt to befriend them backfired. By not making the basketball team and being downgraded to the B squad team, he positioned himself to be further bullied and teased.

Exchange 4: Failure to reach a goal.

In the proceeding exchange Jacob and I begin to discuss failure.

Jacob

Amandeep: *How do you feel about playing on the B squad?*

Jacob: *I'd rather play on the A team, but ... what can I do, nothing.*

(Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Jacob expresses his distress about feeling incapable of ever being a strong enough athlete to play on the A team. He was unable to attain the first goal that he set for himself in high school, and was teased and humiliated for his inabilities rather than respected for his determination. He tries to fit in but is constrained by the selection process of the basketball team, as well as by the adversity of having to persevere against bullying. Nevertheless, Jacob reaches a personal educational milestone—he earns a place on the academic honour roll. In addition to his own desire to be a good student, he convinces his parents to buy him an I-Pod Touch music device in exchange for his good grades (Jacob, telephone interview, July 9, 2009).

Analysis

Goal setting and motivation varies from one participant to the next. Where Tejpal is unconcerned about prioritizing his educational goals, Ajinder is concerned and actively engages in achieving high marks in university prerequisite courses such as Science, English, and Advanced Math. A common theme with all the participants is that they understand that success at school is important for obtaining a good job. All of them mention attending university even though often this goal is set by their parents rather than the participants themselves, as in the cases of Kenny and Jacob. My participants often quoted “good job” as the reason to pursue an education, and their understanding of what this means was quite consistent with Ray’s definition: “*a job that isn’t labour*” (Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008).

My participants also view success at school as a way to earn a high salary. Non-physical jobs with a high monetary compensation are the common motivation for my participant’s educational pursuits and they have taken comfort in believing that they will be able to secure such a job by completing their education. Their belief follows Hall’s 1992, theory of “unified identity” as a means of comfort. My participants are future focused, even though most are not exceptional students. They identify with the idea that they will attend university and succeed at earning a good job. They take comfort in a secure future, irrespective of their actual poor academic performance. It is a false identity, nonetheless comforting.

If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story about ourselves. The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity

of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with—at least temporarily (Hall, 1992, p. 277).

Whether goal setting to get a “good job” or “going to university to make a better income,” all of my participants identified a need to pursue success in school. This theme not only distinguishes them from other groups but also is part of their own group identity. A good education will distinguish them from the “working class,” often their parent’s class, while at the same time, signify their relationship to other preferred groups. Imagining future success gives meaning to their time at school. School means a good job, or a university education, and then a good income. In the modern world, individuals create their own identities by using the tools that they have at their disposal (Giddens, 1991), and my participants want to use school, a modern institution, to avoid employment in the labour industry.

Dave may be one the exception in the group. The theory of identity politics, as a challenge to the dominant forms of group identity (Gayer, 2007), indicates that Dave is a lone voice challenging the dominant desire of my group of participants—the pursuit of educational success to obtain a high salary in a non-labour job. Dave envisions a future that will reward his personal and humanistic motivations. His motivation may be a form of acculturation by which he breaks from the mould and pursues an education for altruistic ends.

In this section, I introduced the goals of my seven participants and the motivations that inspire these goals. In the next section, I discuss the pressures and expectations that influence these goals and motivations, and their outcomes. I am especially concerned

with understanding how these pressures and expectations contribute to the development of my participant's educational identity as students.

Pressures and Expectations, and Educational Identity

How do we view ourselves? Educational identity is the development and acceptance of our identities as students. To expand, our educational identity is based on our self perception and internalization of comments; results; and feedback from teachers, classmates, family expectations, and ourselves (Berry, 1997). Regardless of our awareness, pressures and expectations reinforce our identity. The ways in which my participants voiced their own perceptions of their identity is the topic of this section, which is followed by a section analyzing their experiences.

Exchange 5: Academic misconduct.

In the proceeding exchange, Dave and I discuss academic misconduct.

Dave

Dave: *You know, I think the uh brown kids, they uh just cheat.*

Amandeep: *You think or you know?*

Dave: *I know. They pass sheets. They pass answers from last fall test ... I been asked, but I said no. Brown kids don't care, they like uh just ask me if I want the answers to quizzes, and I'm like no.*

(Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008)

"If I had to, uh, I would uh describe myself as probably average-ish, uh average I guess because I know I can do better" (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008).

Dave can see his own shortcomings and appreciates his problem: "*concentrating in class.*" He has been a below average student for many years, and he has developed a false view that teachers instinctively perceive students who require extra help as a

nuisance and a poor student. He comes to this conclusion because he often needs teacher assistance, and for years, he has “*been a bad student*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008).

He believes that teachers view him as a bad student because he constantly needs their assistance:

I go off my notes right, and if I don't listen then uh, I have to talk to my teachers and uh, and I don't really like to, to talk to my teachers, cause if I ask the teachers simple stuff after class, they will like think that I'm ignoring them in class or that I'm stupid you know (muffled laughter).

(Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009)

Dave wants to be a good student, and he is self motivated to excel. His confidence is somewhat shaky: “*I have done this much better already. I know I will keep getting better. But uh, you see, I uh think of myself as a C+ kinda guy, even though I can do better*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). This exchange identifies how Dave has developed an educational identity that does not reflect his real abilities and recent accomplishments. Dave has developed and internalized the self-view of an underachieving student, even though he currently achieves at a higher level. He views himself as “*intelligent*,” he but finds excuses such as “*I'm lazy*.” These views help him to justify why he has not reached his intellectual capabilities in school.

Dave understands the ease with which a student can fall behind and remain behind in their school assignments: “*I am now trying to just follow because it becomes a chain reaction*” (Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009). Despite the fact that Dave “*wants to be a straight A student*,” he is not willing to bend or break the school rules to

achieve his goal. Despite the pressures, Dave refuses to take shortcuts or participate in any form of cheating. He refuses any offer or invitation to cheat. In the following exchange, Dave demonstrates that he will not be corrupted to cheat or take short cuts.

Kenny

“I don’t wanna screw around here, you know because I like the academy. Besides, by the time we are done playing, we are too tired to screw around and get into trouble (laughter). If I wasn’t tired right, I am more active and get into trouble at school. The last school I would get into trouble for talking in class.”

(Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008)

Kenny changed schools three times during high school; once because his family moved to an adjacent neighbourhood, and twice more based on the school curriculum and extracurricular opportunities. When I interviewed Kenny, he was attending a sports academy that provided him four 79-minute sessions of sports instruction per week. This school helps Kenny to improve his unacceptable behaviour, not a consistent problem for him, but it occurred “*a couple times*” in his previous schools:

I know that if I wanna have a good life when I grow up, I need to do good in school, and uh then I have to go to university, then I will get a good job. But, sometimes I feel like classes are too long or too complicated and I get sidetracked

(Kenny, personal interview, January 12, 2009).

This last comment summarizes how Kenny identifies with school. He views school as a place of opportunity but also as a difficult challenge. He repeatedly discusses his desire to do well in school, while also commenting that he is utterly bored with his school experience. Kenny’s educational identity is conflicted. He has shining moments when he does very well in school but also many other moments when he waits in the principal’s office for punishment for trivial behavioural infractions.

Kenny belongs to a family that expects a great deal. They want him to go to university and provide him with tutors and other resources to make his high school experience easier. For instance, his parents enrolled him in the sports academy and drive him both ways, a considerable distance and time commitment each day. Kenny generally likes school and wants to attend university, but he understands that university, his ultimate educational goal, is difficult to achieve. He blames his underperformance in school to his lack of a “*work ethic*.” Nonetheless, he has a backup plan if he does not get accepted at a university that may lead to the same educational outcome: “*If I couldn’t get in, I would go to community college*” (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

Exchange 6: School as an institution.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss school as an institution.

Ray

Ray: *School is like a jail. Oh, it’s so boring! I hate it, told where to be and what to do. I am doing time there, but uh, I have to finish my time.*

Amandeep: *But every time you mess up, you have to be in school longer. And like what I mean is that you have to go to summer school or uh weekend detention. So why mess up?*

Ray: *I don’t know?*

(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008)

Ray’s educational identity is that of an underachiever, and he is constantly being disciplined. He gets into trouble both in and out of class. He has a drug abuse problem and attends school quite infrequently. Although Ray is quite mild mannered, he boasts that he had “*not been in trouble at all this year*” (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009). He makes this last statement with respect to the first two weeks of his 2009

semester. He is constantly on the radar of the school staff, and Ray believes that his two weeks of immunity from the disciplinary process are due to sheer luck.

Exchange 7: Misbehaviour.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss misbehaviour.

Ray

Amandeep: *Have you changed or what? Why don't you get into trouble this year?*

Ray: *I haven't changed, I've just been lucky.*

Although Ray wants to do better in school, he does not “*really care about doing extra work.*” Ray is on thin ice in that his education could be completely terminated at his next infraction. He seems to be using education as a shield. In addition, he is under scrutiny at home; Ray is convinced his parents would ask him to leave their home if he is expelled, since he has been in trouble from an early age (he has been suspended every year since grade 4): “*they been through lots, they would kick me out*” (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009). His resistance to school and authority was reflected by his first anti-social actions, throwing eggs onto the side of his elementary school, which were the basis for his first school suspension.

Exchange 8: Anti-social behaviour.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss behaviour.

Ray

Amandeep: *What did you do in grade 4?*

Ray: *Egging the school with a friend.*

Amandeep: *Why did you egg the school? Were you mad at a teacher or as a Halloween prank or what?*

Ray: *I don't even remember. Just to do it. It was pretty cool (chuckles) ... it was pretty stupid.*

(Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009)

Jaime

In the proceeding exchange, Jaime and I discuss homework.

Exchange 9: Homework.

Amandeep: *How much homework do you do on a nightly basis?*

Jaime: *I only do about 20 minutes a day of homework. I usually finish my homework in class because we have time in school to finish.*

Amandeep: *You do 20 minutes of homework and you have managed a B average in school. How do you think you would do if you put in a couple of hours, or even just one full hour each night?*

Jaime: *I have done that once, I studied for one full hour on a space exploration project and did really good. That was in grade 6.*

(Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009)

Jaime feels “no pressure” to do well in school. He does not seem concerned about winning awards or being on the honour roll. He feels as though he manages to get fairly good grades despite not wanting to excel nor devoting considerable time to his studies. Jaime’s educational identity is to use the forum of school as a means to have fun and occupy his time with friends. If he manages to do well, he does. If he does poorly, he remains unconcerned:

My attitude towards school is to do my work and get by. You know what I mean?

I don't hate it but I don't look forward to it. I look forward to going back after long breaks because I can socialize at school (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Jaime does not have a great self-expectation. Regarding school, he “couldn’t care less!”

Tejpal

Tejpal believes that school is “*boring*” and that it lacks a hands-on-approach that could alleviate the boredom for him. He believes that his school should have more “*stuff like science experiments*” because with respect to the current curriculum, he is “*not interested in the work*” (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2008).

This boredom has started to contribute to Tejpal disengaging from school and viewing school as “*a chore*.” Nonetheless, he feels that he manages to do well in school. Feelings of boredom, combined with a lack of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and a lack of pressure from home may contribute to his growing and potentially permanent disengagement from the educational process.

Ajinder

Ajinder has great educational expectations for himself. He is a “*top student*” and wants to continue to get straight A’s throughout high school. For him, school is “*quite easy*.” His older siblings are both accomplished in their studies, and Ajinder is focused on being a top student, so he can go directly from high school to a “*good school like UBC*.” By his top academic performance, he shows how he wants to earn the respect of his teachers. When speaking of his Math teacher, he says: “*He is just a nice teacher and we want to do it for him*” (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2008).

Ajinder feels pressure to be the best student in his grade. Unlike most other participants, Ajinder knew the other top students in his grade. He tells me that he wants to compete amongst the top students of his grade, but he understands the considerable challenge of being number one: “*Libby is the best in grade 10, like that guy always has studying on his mind*” (Ajinder, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Ajinder has

decided who he want to be (Giddens, 1991), even if their true identity is still a work in progress.

Jacob

Jacob was not only the youngest participant in this group but also, in my opinion, the one with the least defined identity. At school, he describes himself as a student whose “*marks are slipping*,” although he continues to do well as is indicated by his final transcripts (Jacob, telephone interview, July 9, 2009). As a victim of bullying and rumours, his identity, in part, is being forced on him. He struggles between earning/creating an identity for himself and having one forced upon him. This daily struggle may help to explain his constant dissatisfaction with himself. Even when he achieves high marks in school and accolades from his parents, he says: “*I can do better, way better*” (Jacob, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Pushed, shoved, and verbally abused by a group of popular East Indian (E. I.) males, he has a great deal of trouble fitting in.

Jacob combats the abuse by downplaying it. Undoubtedly, it affects him. As a student, he is “*trying to get all A's*” even though he does not “*do enough homework*.” Jacob is dealing with many problems, including self-doubt, bullies, parental expectations, and trying to fit in, which all contribute to his identity construction.

Analysis

The most recurrent theme within this section and the thesis research as a whole is the participants’ feeling that school is boring, and thereby constraining. Every participant, even Ajinder, the highest achieving student, felt pressured by the conflict between their wanting to excel at school and their feeling jaded about and uninterested in class work.

Anthony Giddens theory of “structuration” explains the duality of structure: individuals are free agents, free to create their self-identity, but they are not free from the structural constraints that set limits to free activity (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). The institution of school is one such structural constraint. Ray’s describes school as a “jail” and by doing so, illustrates Giddens theory of struction; Ray, as a “free actor” feels constrained by the bureaucratic requirements of each school day.

Ray’s comments suggest that his identity is a product of identification rather than identity. He constantly renegotiates his identity in relation to the conditions he encounters. Rather than a consensual process of mutuality and negotiation, Ray creates his educational identity “through a process of resistance and imposition” (Jenkins, 2004, p. 73). To some degree, this is the case for every student that describes school as boring, uninteresting, and less than engaging. Ray behaves contrary to the established mode of good social behaviour, and instead of trying to better his grades and improve his behaviour, he is content with “passing” and “not getting kicked out.” On one hand, he wants to prevent his expulsion, on the other, he finds himself incredibly unengaged. He is caught in the contrary world of his striving to be free from school and his simultaneous awareness of the promise of school as an empowering body that can alleviate future pressures and expectations.

Ray’s actions are contrary to the established order. He exhibits a form of domain identification in that he has become the product of his actions and has internalized the administration’s reactions when he refers to himself as a student that frequently finds himself in trouble. He shares this domain identification with Ajinder; however, Ajinder positively identifies with school. Ajinders’ positive identification makes him seek to be

the best student in the school, a significant pressure for a 15 year old boy. Ajinder is a standout student who wants to work hard for the teachers he respects. This behaviour is self reflexive because he works hard and is anxious to please his teachers (Giddens, 1990), and he is mindful of creating an identity as a top student.

In addition to Ray and Ajinder, Jacob is the other definite exception within the participant group. He is the victim of bullies who torment him on many occasions. He stays in his bedroom alone for extended periods. His educational and personal identities are in conflict, and of all the participants are the least defined. He struggles to create his own identity and does not allow his bullies to keep him in a state of fear and isolation. His contemporary identity is in a process of negotiation (Hall, 1996). He has made clear choices about who he wants to become (Marcia, 1980) but is constrained by the bullies and his desire to fit in. The bullies are significant others, who through daily torment, assign him a role with which he is uncomfortable and works to shed. Jacob feels the pressure to belong, which as a need for social belonging is a basic human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), a connection to others that Jacob is lacking. Stigmatization or not fitting-in can give rise to belonging uncertainty, and this uncertainty can undermine motivation (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Attribute theory describes how an individual's perception of self or others influences their own incentive to succeed. With respect to education, attribute theory emphasizes that a learner's current self-perception influences their current success or failure. If a student has a positive self-perception of themselves as a student, they are motivated to repeat the actions that brought about this positive attitude (Weiner, 1992). Most of the other participants enjoy school and claim to be good students. Even though

they feel a sense of belonging to the school, they perceive their educational identity as a relationship to peer groups and other social relationships rather than academic.

Yon (2000) concludes that identity is malleable, since it always is being constructed and reconstructed in relation to our daily social interactions, which in the case of the present study are interactions amongst like-minded students. The consensus of my participants that school is boring is a sentiment that is shared and reinforced by their classmates. My participants create narratives to define who they are, and they find that in general, they fit in with their peers. They identify with the group norms rather than create large distinctions between themselves and their peer groups, even at the beset of the pressures and expectations to improve their education. .

In this section, I discussed the pressures, expectations, and formation of educational identity. In the next section, I discuss the impact of peer groups and role models, and how belonging is important for facilitating educational and social identity.

Peer Groups, Role Models, and Belonging

Arguably, peer groups are the most important figures in an adolescent's life. Easily impressionable and seeking to belong, young men negotiate their behaviour to win approval. In the context of this present study, peer groups are the groups of friends that the participants would normally associate with, as well the groups that they did not associate with but nonetheless were affected by. An example of the latter group is the "cool group of kids" from which some of the participants strived to gain acceptance. Role models come from all walks of life and make a considerable impact on the lives of some of the study participants. In this section, I present the participants' thoughts about

peer groups and role models, and an analysis of how belonging impacts the development of their identities.

Dave

Dave is not concerned with being the “*most popular kid in school*,” and he does not want friends who are attracted to him based on material items. Instead, Dave believes that his sincere friends are those who like him for his personality. Dave has a group of approximately twenty friends, all of whom he has known since the eighth grade or elementary school. His friends are mostly male, although he includes a few females in the twenty, since they “*hang around by the lockers where we are at lunch*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). Most of Dave’s friends are in the same grade as him, and they spend most of their time outside of school playing video games. Dave does not exclusively associate with friends from one specific ethnic background. He calls his group of friends “*multicultural*.”

Dave describes the students in his school of 1500 in Abbotsford, B.C as belonging to “*cliques*,” meaning that they belong to specific and defined peer groups, and do not often associate with other students outside of their own specific group. He comments that the groups are separated by “*race*,” but racial tension or incidents of racism do not occur in the school: “*Racism, how does that work?*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). Dave maintains the same friendships both in and out of school. He believes that he would accept new members into his group without question, saying: “*We are the only group that would just take a new guy no matter what*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). Dave considers himself as accepting and open to new friends unless “*the guy doesn’t shut up*.” He believes that another predominantly East

Indian group only would accept new members “*if the new guy was brown number one, and like dressed real good, like expensive clothes and stuff*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008).

Unlike most other students, Dave says he can straddle the line between his group and the predominantly East Indian group. He maintains friendship with the East Indian group, and suggests that his ability to associate with more than one group is due to his personality and “*reputation as a nice guy.*” Dave prefers his group to the other group because the “*brown guys are stereotypical, they act all gangster.*” He claims that “*none of the E.I.s hate school.*” He often has overheard or participated in discussions that allude to entering university. He does not know many people, including the older siblings of his schoolmates, who have attended university: “*None of my friend’s older brothers went to school.*” Dave believes that the East Indian youth in Abbotsford “*all wanna be businessmen, they all think they will like own a chain of stores or something*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008).

Dave looks up to his oldest sister who is an excellent college student and has considerable academic and career goals that include a future in law. He also looks up to his family doctor who is an East Indian male: “*... and he helps people and you know I uh, like that when people help other people*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). This role model may be the inspiration for Dave’s future ambition to work in the medical field, although Dave is unsure if a connection exists.

Kenny

In the following dialogue, I take two aspects of Kenny’s comments and put them together to show a correlation:

Don't have one here but at last school I had one. Manny, he was in grade 12 and he was nice and cool and would take time to talk to everyone, right. You know, he played sports, he's good, but you know, uh he would like talk, even to younger guys right, and uh give pointers, and he was cool [...] I wanna be a role model for kids. But not as a sports player, just as a good guy [...] I could get it with my personality and I try by talking to the grade 8 kids about sports and stuff (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

Initially, Kenny describes an older high school student that he considers to be a role model. He lists the reasons that make Manny stand out as cool and nice, and how he earn Kenny's admiration. Next, Kenny describes how he wants to be a role model for younger kids and what steps he is taking to be a positive influence on the younger kids in his school and clubs. By initiating these steps, Kenny is mimicking his own role model Manny.

In the past three years, Kenny has changed schools and friends several times. Presently, he has a different set of friends at school than after school: *"My friends outside of school are from other schools and sports fiends, they are random guys I have met"* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Currently, Kenny is trying to find his identity and place among his new classmates: *"I am just one of the guys. Our group doesn't have any leaders. We just stick together"* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). Kenny now has two good friends: *"I have one white friend and one brown friend"* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). When I ask him why he only has one white friend, he replies: *"He is the only white kid in school that talks to us"* (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

Exchange 10: Interracial friendships.

In the proceeding exchange, Kenny and I discuss friendships.

Kenny

Amandeep: *(laugh)* What do you mean, he's the only white kid that talks to you?

Kenny: *Seriously!*

Amandeep: *Why don't the other white kids talk to you?*

Kenny: *I don't know, I've never asked. Who cares, we are happy with our own group, so like, we don't really care about anyone else.*

(Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008)

Kenny's school is "seventy percent or more East Indians," and he is comfortable with his two new friends. Although he says that he loosely associates with the "basketball players and preppy brown kids" he does not search out many new friends because he has many friends outside of school, including his girlfriend. At school, Kenny likes having his "two main guys" because he believes they are "trustworthy, they don't tell secrets." Kenny and his friends talk about "sports and what's going on [...]" never talk about future plans and about family stuff." Outside of school, Kenny admits that some of his friends drink alcohol, but he has a revulsion to the taste.

His parents, who actively participate in his sports associations, also closely monitor Kenny's activities outside of school. Speaking about his parents and girlfriend he says: "they don't let me go anywhere with her unless we're like out in a group" (Kenny, personal interview, January 21, 2009). Kenny seems to internalize the need to excel in his studies, and he is tutored daily by his educational role model Sam. Sam is Kenny's older cousin and a first year university student. Kenny says that he does not know anybody else that goes to university. He says that all of his "buddies older

brothers are like drop outs or involved in gangs” (Kenny, personal interview, January 21, 2009).

Ray

Ray lacks positive male role models. In grade 10, he does not associate with any grade 10 students at break, lunch, or after school: *“I don’t chill with the grades 10s, my buddies are older, grade 11 and 12”* (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009). Ray refers to other grade 10 students as *“kids.”* Ray spends most of his time with the disobedient faction of the male student population, the troublemakers or *“Jacks, all of the idiots of the school”* (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009). He does not have an older brother or close male cousin that he can rely on for male-to-male advice and support. Instead, Ray turns to an older neighbourhood friend who is now a school friend: *“most of my out of school friends are drop outs and uh most of my friends in school are like the bad students”* (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009).

Ray’s friends are from diverse backgrounds. Race is not a factor in determining this group’s membership. Anti-establishment males are attracted to this group. When Ray is in class, he relies on the help of the students that sit beside him; they provide him with notes or answers on exams. Even at school, Ray does not *“talk about school unless there is a hard test or something that day”* (Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008). Instead, he preoccupies himself with spending a majority of the school day *“cutting class”* to hang out with friends who may not even go to school. He spends a great deal of his time at a *“friend’s place”* where they engage in *“blazing”* (smoking marijuana) (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009).

When I asked Ray if he has an educational role model, he said:

I know one guy, he is a Chinese guy that lives close to me, this guy like gets straight A's, so I kinda wish that I could be like him. Uh well not like him really, but uh like I wish that I could have his report card

(Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008).

When I asked him if there was anyone who looked up to him, he replied: *"I got like one little cousin that looks up to me right, he is 6, but I don't wanna be anyone's role model. I wouldn't know how to be a role model"* (Ray, personal interview, November 20, 2008). Unlike Kenny's example of learning how to be a role model from his own role model Manny, and thereafter, mentoring younger soccer players, Ray has never had a positive male role model that he can mimic.

I questioned Ray on achievement and building a life that does not involve drugs and skipping class. He says that he plans on making a fresh start next year. It would appear that the opposite may actually result.

Exchange 11: Skipping school.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss skipping school.

Ray

Ray: Next year I will be in school because my buddies will be gone and their cars will be gone and we can't skip. And then I will put my mind to school.

Amandeep: But, once these buddies leave school, they probably won't go straight to work or college, right? They will probably have nothing to do. They will probably hang around and be available to pick you up even more.

Ray: Ya true.

(Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009)

The last exchange shows how Ray was corrected from falsely believing that his attendance would invariably improve when his older friends were no longer in school, “next year.”

Jaime

Jaime maintains the same friends both in and out of class. He defines his friends as the “*whatever students*,” meaning that none of his friends are failing, but none are really good students either. Jaime has a lot of friends at school and believes this is due to his willingness to openly approach and talk to everybody. Jaime’s predominant peer group is East Indian males. He also considers some of his teachers as his friends. He believes that talking to teachers and being nice to them makes him popular among the teaching staff: “*I like the Chef best he is actually a good guy when you get to know him*” (Jaime, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Jaime does not have any visible role models; he does not look up to an older student or have a role model in his family or from within his friend group. He does not look up to any individual in the community, media, or sports. He does admire students that get “*A’s and good grades and stuff*,” but he does not consider them as role models. He spends a great deal of time playing videogames and chatting on his cellular phone. Jaime’s parents know most of his after school friends, since they spend considerable time at each other’s homes playing videogames. Jaime has “*two grade 11 buddies*,” while the rest of his friends are the same age as him (Jaime, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Tejpal

Tejpal does not have any visible role models. In regards to educational achievement, he does not look up to any students or older relatives. He does not have

friends in university and has not been witness to a friend or family that has achieved great academic or financial success. He values money and financial success, and he values the means through which he believes financial success is attained. He believes that a university education will result in his attaining financial success. Tejpal is under the impression that educational success results in financial success, even though he does not have any direct evidence of this by way of a role model. His influences are from the media, although he acknowledges that *“I don’t wanna be like them, I just wanna live like them”* (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2008).

Although Tejpal does not value any one person, he does value an entity—money is his role model:

I don’t have gotta role model in school. I don’t uh even think I look up to any other kid? I guess I like people with like uh lots of money. I just wanna have lots of money, a good job and then lotsa money. I just see someone, some guy you know, I don’t know who it is, but if he has money or a black BMW, something, I think that’s pretty cool (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2008).

Although Tejpal cannot define a role model, he has become one for his younger cousins. Despite the fact that he is not achieving straight A’s, at home and among his cousins, he has garnered a reputation as a good student. He enjoys his place as a role model for his cousins: *“I’m funny and they know I’m a good student. I’m good for them”* (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2008). Tejpal is a popular student at his large high school of *“maybe two thousand kids [...] maybe seventy or eighty percent East Indian.”* Formerly, Tejpal associated with a different group of kids, the *“hang around kids”* who occupied space in the cafeteria in close proximity to the popular group of kids.

These kids were finding their place in the school hierarchy of coolness. When a student becomes “*cool enough*,” they can join the cool group at the table. This table of kids are generally known to have more affluent home lives, which are symbolized by their possession of “*better things*.” Although Tejpal is “*mostly at the tables now*,” he still associates with the former group on an almost daily basis (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009).

Tejpal’s peers at school are mostly males and almost exclusively East Indian. He describes his peers as “*pretty good in school, but uh few better, some not so great*”; he describes them all as “*average, like B and C students*” (Tejpal, personal interview, November 19, 2008). Tejpal believes that his group is not impervious to accepting troublemakers, but they absolutely would not accept a top level student who is constantly discussing or engaging in academic conversation: “*our group wouldn’t hang out with someone that always had school on his mind [...] our group would hang out with someone that was a trouble maker, you know, before someone that was like a bookworm nerd guy*” (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009).

Ajinder

As the proceeding comment exemplifies, Ajinder is constantly ranking his own intellectual position in accordance to his school and extracurricular peers:

I have a lot of the same friends at school and outside of school. I have some friends from soccer club that don’t go to school with me. I have about 15 really good friends. Only 3 or 4 are on my level, smart like me (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Ajinder is an extremely competitive student and athlete. He is not only popular among his peers but also with his coaches and teachers. He has a positive reciprocal relationship with the adult male influences in his life. He appreciates and thrives on recognition and reward: *“My coach loves me because I give a hundred”* (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009). Ajinder always has had positive male influences in his life. His educational and professional role model is his brother who also was a high achieving high school student and athlete. His brother finished his post-secondary education and entered his profession quickly: *“Ya like, my bro is the smartest of us all (siblings) easy”* (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Ajinder admits that he does not *“act smart”* around his school friends due in part to his character of being an easy going and sociable person who is well liked and easy to relate to. He considers himself smart, but he does not know how to act smart, and admits to acting immature at times:

Like my brother and sister, they think I’m stupid because of the way I act. They think I’m kinda like a kid, like uh childish. People would think that I’m not smart when they meet me, but actually I am (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Although Ajinder does not play basketball, most of his close friends are fellow tenth grader males who play on the basketball team.

Ajinder believes that he is friendly with every student in his grade, and he is conscientious about not saying anything negative about any of his fellow students during our interviews. He makes a point to *“say hi to everyone”* and often actually thinks about people who are not popular or socially accepted as cool kids: *“I think about people that*

ain't well known. You know, uh how they live their life, because they don't really get to do anything" (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009). He thinks that people who do not belong to the most popular social groups do not have an outlet for fun and activity. Ajinder also is astute about recognizing the personal characteristics that could result in people not being accepted in a group:

These people aren't cool because they don't talk, or like socialize and then like people don't get to know them. They have their own group but they are all the exact same. But like it's also, it's the clothes that they wear. The clothes you wear determine who you hang with (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Jacob

Jacob attends a school that has a large minority population. Although East Indian representation is not as high as in some of the other B.C. schools, it still approaches *"forty percent."* Jacob associates with a group of *"mostly white"* friends who he has known since elementary school. Jacob attends a high school that is in a different geographic area than the high school associated with his residential neighbourhood. He chose this school because of a ride share with his older female cousin who attends the same school. He also chose this school to avoid elementary school bullies who attend another school.

Jacob tries to befriend the East Indian males in his high school. He joins similar sports teams and offers to have his mom *"pick them up"* on the morning ride to school. He has not been able to befriend these males, and once again, he is the target of bullying at the hands of the East Indians he tried to befriend. Jacob is not selected to play

basketball alongside the other grade eight males. Instead, he is demoted to the B squad on which he occupies most of his time sitting on the bench. Again, he is isolated from his team mates: *“I play only 4 minutes per game (sigh) I sit on the end of the bench, kinda away from everyone else, uh I don’t have anyone that sits right beside me”* (Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Currently, Jacob’s closest ally is his older female cousin. As a victim of bullying for two years herself, she comforts Jacob and counsels him about coping strategies and prevention mechanisms for dealing with bullies: *“she says like just ignore them and uh don’t hang near them or uh like go to the counsellor and he will send a peer tutor to talk to the guys (bullies)”* (Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2009). She advises Jacob to visit the school counsellor and ask them to confidentially ask a twelfth grade peer tutor to talk to the bullies. The peer tutors are older and command respect based on age alone. In Jacob’s cousin’s case, the bullies ended their behaviour after a peer tutor spoke to them (Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Although Jacob tries to ignore the East Indian males who bully him and spends more time with his elementary school friends, he feels trapped. His father encourages him to participate and play on the basketball team. Jacob is caught between fitting in and letting his father down. Jacob’s elementary school friends do not seem good enough for him or his father, and the friends Jacob wants to make do not accept his friendship; they verbally abuse him and make jokes at his expense.

Jacob looks up to basketball star Kobe Bryant as a role model. Jacob finds his role model difficult to emulate because he cannot maintain a spot on the regular basketball roster. When Jacob mentions Kobe Bryant as his role model, the bullies

verbally abuse him saying: “*you suck you’re a disgrace to Kobe*” (Jacob, personal interview, January 11, 2009). Jacob wants to find his place among his peers in high school, and he continues to search for an identity that he can claim as his own.

Analysis

The lack of visible role models is negative when youth need direction and advice. In my experiences with this participant group, I find that they rarely reach out for help, especially considering that in general they usually are unaware that any problem exists. For example, in my opinion, Tejpai is an intelligent and conscientious young man earning somewhat above average marks that make him a viable college candidate. He lacks any visible positive role models who could direct him towards post secondary education or help him to develop his other innate talents and desires that he may possess but not notice. Tejpai is motivated by money, and he believes that an education will earn him prized possessions such as a “*black BMW*.” His influences are his peers, as well as media images, which have the power to form his reality (Giddens, 1991). In the school setting, student identity is formed in relation to interactions with peers and media (Yon, 2000), and the third influence on identity formation—adult influence—is missing in Tejpai’s life.

Generally, Jaime is left to his own devices and perception to understand the world. He has developed a friendship based relationship with some of his teachers. Yon (2000) points out that when finding their place in their social milieu, students are influenced by their interactions with authority. In this case, Jaime has found that authority at school, in his teachers. To do so, he has created an identity that is relatable, and sociable. He befriended teachers by initiating daily conversations about current affairs.

In his previous school, Kenny had a positive role model (Manny) who he uses as a model example to mentor young student athletes. Kenny also interacts with his cousin Sam, a successful university student and Kenny's tutor. Kenny identifies with positive role models and has shown an ability to become a role model himself through his experience with Manny. In Kenny's case, significant others (Hall, 1996) are older males who set a positive example for him to successfully emulate. With respect to Giddens' (1990) theory of identity, Kenny's emulation of Manny is a self-reflexive project: "we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (p. 75). Self-reflexive individuals make decisions with a forward direction, incorporating who they are and who they might become, which is the strategy that Kenny uses.

Ray is surrounded by negative older male influences. His school group is an accumulation of misfits that he calls the "*Jacks*" or troublemakers. Bauman (2004) argues that the traditional resources of identity formation no longer significantly contribute to individual identity formation in modern society. Ray separates himself from both the prescribed traditions of his home and the host state. Berry's 1997 theory of acculturation refers to this kind of separation as the marginalization form of acculturation in which an individual cannot create their identity based on the traditions of their home state or adopt the values of the host state (as cited in Phinney, 2001). Since he lacks direction from the traditional culture and does not accept the modern value system, Ray carves out his identity irrespective of Punjabi or Western norms.

Ajinder, on the other hand, looks up to his brother and turns to him for "*general advice [...] course planning*." Ajinder is sociable and well liked, and fits in with most groups, although he places a greater value on maintaining the culture of his host society,

a form of acculturation known as assimilation (Berry, 1997). He wants to be the top student in his school and enter a good university, Western ideals that he learns through exposure to the Canadian educational system.

Jacob desperately needs a positive role model who can help him resolve his problem of living as a victim. Jacob has been “othered,” and he is trying to find his identity (Caballero, 2009; Hall, 2003). After being constantly rejected at school, he turns to his female cousin who shares a similar past experience. He identifies with her and values her advice. Hall (2003) describes “othering” as a process in which an individual internalizes and views themselves as an outsider. Due to being bullied, Jacob feels “othered.”

Dave looks up to his family doctor as a role model. This doctor, an East Indian male, is the epitome of accomplishment in the Sikh community. Dave appreciates how this doctor helps people in his community, and he wants to emulate this kind of caring responsibility in his future. At home, Dave looks up to his sister, a rarity in the Sikh patriarchal macho culture. Attribute theory (Yon, 2000) describes how an individual’s perception of self or others influences his/her own motivation, and Dave is a good example of how the positive contributions and success of people we admire (in Dave’s case, his doctor and his sister) are positive motivations for ourselves.

In this section, I discussed peer groups, role models, and belonging. I showed how positive role models help to shape the identity of my participants by providing a model to emulate. I also showed how the search for belonging takes on many forms, from leaving one group of friends for another (Ajinder) to working to befriend your own

bullies (Jacob). In the next section, I discuss the role of parents and family in the education of my participants.

Parents, Family Influences, and Education

Parents and siblings greatly influence the development of our value systems, cultural or otherwise. As young students, the type of educational interactions that we share with our parents may determine the value that we place on education. In this chapter, I discuss the levels of interaction between my participants and their parents and siblings. The aim of this section is to describe the level of educational involvement and influence of parents and siblings for each participant. I conclude this section with an analysis of recurring cultural themes.

Dave

Dave recalls a life-changing experience in middle school. After years of “*doing bad*” both with respect to classroom achievement and behaviour, Dave’s parents visit his teacher: “*She [teacher] said that high school will be like really hard, and like high school teachers don’t give second chances*” (Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009).

Dave’s teacher wants Dave to pay more attention in class and become less apathetic because he has become progressively more lackadaisical and his marks have fallen. Dave attributes his behaviour, which includes “*doodling and yawning*,” to his disinterest in the school material. Being the focus of a parent/teacher intervention did not inspire Dave to immediately become a focused student. The intervention did make an instantaneous impact on his parents and on their motivation to be deeply involved in Dave’s educational life.

Dave's parents took the teachers comments to heart and immediately began to monitor his nightly homework. Although they did not directly check his homework, they had one of his two older sisters assist him and help him to correct his errors. Following the intervention, Dave was "*grounded for a month*," which entailed nightly homework, no friends, and no video games. Dave describes his parents as "*more angry than usual*." Usually, when Dave produced a below average interim or final report cards, his parents ground him only for a week, but this time Dave reports: "*my dad was involved, he got pissed!*"

Dave's sisters are both standout students, one in grade 12 and the other in college. They continue to help him with his homework as needed in difficult subjects like "*Math, Science, and Socials. But I don't need help, maybe twice a month or like maybe before tests*" (Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009).

Kenny

Kenny's parents are lenient and understanding but also demand that he follow their rules: "*Most of my friends go out and party and stay out till 2 o'clock. But my parents don't let me stay out past 11*" (Kenny, personal interview, January 21, 2009). Kenny's parents do not allow him to stay out on school nights unless he is visiting his tutor or at an organized school activity such as the school dance. His parents participate in his sports clubs, and his mom manages one such club that is not affiliated with his school academy. Unlike any of the other participants, Kenny openly talks to his parents about his girlfriend: "*that they don't care, they even give us rides and stuff*" (Kenny, personal interview, January 21, 2009). This is drastically unorthodox, considering that Kenny and his girlfriend are both East Indian Sikhs. Customarily, Sikhs practice

arranged marriage and do not openly discuss dating, love, or even opposite gender interests with their parents. This unorthodox approach to dating is the outcome of two sets of modern parents who wish to set aside older traditional religion-based practices, and who want to embrace the reality of their children growing up in the West. Although both sets of parents were born in India, they were raised in Canada and had traditional Western courtships rather than arranged marriages.

Kenny's parents provide him with opportunities that engage him and help him to succeed:

First, they took me out of [English secondary school] and put me in [French immersion]. But, like I was doing bad,, I hated that place, I uh couldn't understand and got in trouble for talking and stuff. Then they put me in [sports academy]. It's better here (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

His parents also provide resources to increase his potential for educational success: “*for maybe more than two years, I would see the tutor like twice a week*” (Kenny, personal interview, November 16, 2008). During grade ten, Kenny received tutoring assistance from his cousin Sam.

Ray

Ray's parents endure and must deal with Ray's many incidents of misbehaviour. As the youngest child of four, Ray tells me that his parents “*never had problems with my sisters,*” (Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009) but frequently, they must deal with letters from the school or attend administrative meetings to discuss Ray's school violations and misbehaviour.

Exchange 12: Discipline.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss discipline.

Ray

Amandeep: So when your parents see letters from school, who deals with the letters, signing them or talking to teachers and principals, your Mum or Dad, Sisters?

Ray: Mum [...] Sisters tell me to do my work and stuff but they can't make me.

Amandeep: What does your Mom do when she has to deal with these letters?

Ray: She gets choked! I mean, sometimes, she is like psycho mad but uh sometimes she cries.

Amandeep: How does that make you feel, you know, when your mum is crying?

Ray: I dunno I feel bad I guess.

Amandeep: Last semester you were suspended for 5 days. How did your parents react?

Ray: Choked, big time! They kicked my ass [...] they hit me.

(Ray, personal interview, January 16, 2009)

Ray is at the center of a great deal of attention from his parents and siblings. The attention that he receives is directed towards dealing with his negative actions or with reprimanding the consequences of these actions. His mom scolds, yells, cries, and even spansks Ray, but he seems unaffected and unwilling to change his behaviour. In addition to these initial reactions, his mom indefinitely confiscates Ray's "TV, XBOX, whatever else she can grab." Regardless of his actions or the reaction of his parents or teachers, Ray is unwilling to listen or reason with his parents. Ray's sisters help him with his homework, but he does not view them as role models.

Even Ray's teachers support him by commending him when he completes assignments and by giving him second chances to submit missed work. Even though he has been threatened with expulsion, his principals continuously allow him to remain a student at his high school.

Jaime

Jaime's parents do not hold Jaime accountable for completing his homework or missing assignments, albeit he "*hardly misses any assignments*." His parents want him to "*get a good report card*," and they often remind him to do his homework. Sometimes, "*they both get on my case*," but usually only for the short time after he presents a poor report card. Only one of Jaime's three older sisters is enrolled in post secondary education. His other two sisters did not go on to do post secondary education, and instead, they work in the retail industry (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Jaime and his parents do not discuss post secondary education, and long-term planning is not a part of the family's normal daily discussions. Jaime's parents are pretty "*laid back*" and do not impose many rules. According to Jaime, his parents are unable to assist with homework because "*they never helped me with my homework [...] how would they know what to do [...] they never went to high school*" (Jamie, personal interview, November 19, 2008). Similarly, Jaime's sisters are uninvolved in Jaime's educational life.

Exchange 13: Siblings and homework.

In the proceeding exchange, Ray and I discuss siblings and homework.

Jamie

Amandeep: *Do you ever ask any of your three older sisters for help with schoolwork?*

Jaime: *No. Why? They have already grad'd, so they wouldn't know what to do ... when I need help I uh just call my friends because they are going through it right now.*

Amandeep: *Do they ever discuss school and your work with you?*

Jaime: *Sometimes they ask me if I got work, but that's about it.*

(Jamie, personal interview, November 19, 2008)

Jaime has not been in trouble with the school staff or administration throughout high school, unlike in elementary school where Jaime often was in trouble. He was sent to the principal's office numerous times for things such as "*fooling around with the guys in the halls and messing around stuff*" (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

During his years in elementary school, he was suspended on more than one occasion for school violations that he would rather not mention. He recalls that his parents "were not too hard ... *they did nothing really. Well they took my stuff away but nothing else. You know, I guess I just wasn't supposed to do it again*" (Jamie, personal interview, January 11, 2009).

Tejpal

Tejpal's parents are very lenient and do not participate in his academic or social life. They appear to trust Tejpal to the extent that he is not restrained from staying out until very late, and he can freely associate with whomever he pleases. Even though he does not have friends who are involved in crime or excessive misbehaviour at school, he and some of his young friends "*drink alcohol on weekends*" (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009) and have done so since the eighth grade. This behaviour continues even though Tejpal was caught under the influence of alcohol during school hours. In the eighth grade, Tejpal "*was caught skipping and drinking with friends*" (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009), and he was suspended for three days following a school

meeting with his parents. Tejpal does not recall his parents yelling or being upset. Perhaps, wanting to believe that this was a one-time incident, they told Tejpal to cease the negative behaviour, and he assured them that he would.

Tejpal's parents did not investigate the prevalence, or the underpinnings, of his alcohol use. If they had made further inquiries, they may have become aware that he had skipped school to drink alcohol with other young friends on numerous occasions: "*skipped and drank three, maybe four times before getting caught*" (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009). Tejpal's parents do not hold him accountable or punish him if they catch him misbehaving:

I don't get in trouble at home. Sometimes I get yelled at but that's it. They never take my stuff or anything like that. I am allowed to do what I want. I can go out and stuff, I don't have to be home at any time. My parents trust me totally (Tejpal, personal interview, January 13, 2009).

Tejpal's parents trust him to make his own decisions regarding social and academic life. I recognize Tejpal to be a bright and promising young student and man who also is in danger of letting his negative behaviour get him into serious trouble. What started as a phase of experimentation with alcohol in the eighth grade has become a regular weekend occurrence.

Exchange 14: Parents and education.

In the proceeding exchange, Ajinder and I discuss parents and education.

Ajinder

Amandeep: What do your parents tell you about school? What do they want from you in school?

Ajinder: They know I do my best, they know that I do my homework. They don't have to tell me anything. Uh, they don't tell me anything about school. They know that I will do well in school. They aren't strict. I could even stop trying and my parents wouldn't say anything

(Ajinder, personal interview, 14 November 2008).

Ajinder's siblings, especially his older brother, plays a pivotal role in Ajinder's life. Ajinder's brother, a college graduate, and his sister, a grade-twelve honours student, are exceptional role models who lead by example and facilitate Ajinder's success: "*My sister has been through the classes so she tells me which ones are best and what to take for university*" (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2008). Role model siblings can function as substitutes for the parents' role to support the educational success of their other children. Ajinder's parents do not play any part in Ajinder's education.

Ajinder's parents are not involved in his educational or social life, since they trust him to the point that he can leave and return home at his own discretion: "*They are very easy going. They don't stop me from doing anything. I just have to tell them where I'm going and if I'm late I will call*" (Ajinder, personal interview, January 11, 2009). Ajinder appears to give his parents little to worry about; he is maturing in the shadow of his responsible older siblings. It is evident that he is self-motivated to succeed academically: "*the only reason I try [school] is because I want a better future. I want to do good so that I can get a good job*" (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2008). Ajinder and his parents maintain a completely non-confrontational relationship, and he claims that he has "*never been mad at my parents.*" Further, he indicates that he rarely gets into a confrontation with his parents or their bad side: "*the last time I have gotten in trouble at home is, uh I don't know, uh I can't remember*" (Ajinder, personal interview, November 14, 2008).

Jacob

Jacob's mom stays at home to perform the household duties, which include, as part of her ride share responsibilities, driving Jacob and his brother to and from school and extracurricular sports commitments. Jacob's dad has a full-time job in addition to running a small family business. His parents are consumed with providing the best care and opportunity for their two males. His parents want him to participate in extracurricular activities, so they have enrolled him in soccer and strongly encourage his participation in high school basketball. They are very concerned that Jacob participate and be a part of the social and extracurricular scene at his high school.

Although they are unable to assist him with his homework, Jacob is an honour roll student at his high school. Daily household conversations revolve around Jacob and his brother and their education. His parents discuss his homework on a nightly basis, although he manipulates the truth when he would rather play outside:

If I tell them that I finished my homework at school, they say okay. If I tell them I don't have homework, they say okay. If they ask and I say I have homework then they say do it and I do it (Jacob, personal interview, November 16, 2008).

His parents do not help him with his work or participate in his school activities, but they do provide encouragement and ideas, which often focus on future goals and aspirations, since they already have begun to encourage Jacob about long term educational and career choices:

Amandeep: *What do your parents tell you about school?*

Jacob: *They tell me like to do good and do my homework right and uh you know Aman, to go to college and become a doctor or a dentist.*

(Jacob, personal interview, November 16, 2008)

Analysis

In diaspora communities, the second generation comes into contact with a new set of “significant others” (Hall, 1997)—with people such as teachers and with institutions such as Canadian schools—to whom the first generation was never exposed. The parents of most of my participants have no formal education in Canada, and the school is an institution that causes strain for both students and parents, but for different reasons. Students are constrained by the demands of their involvement, while parents are constrained by their lack of knowledge about the system and their failure to engage it even to support their children. Most often, this inability to help their own children stems from the parents lack of education, a by-product of diaspora migration and the generational gap. As Yon (2000) points out, a culture gap exists between the interests of teachers and students, which also exists between my participants and their parents. The school is a site of a complex East-West culture clash.

The traditional functionalist approach suggests that that youth “become” by adult influence (Buckingham, 2008). In the case of some of my participants, uninvolved parents allow these participants to make their own decisions in both the educational and social realm. For example, Ajinder and Tejpal set their own curfews and have little supervision. Even the parents who are involved with their children’s education have a blind willingness to accept, at face value, their children’s claims (Dave, Kenny, and Jacob) that their homework is finished even if that is not the case.

In this section, I explored how the parents and siblings of my participants are involved in their education and lives. In the next section, I analyze the recurrent themes found in my participant interviews.

Reoccurring Themes

The participant interviews and their analysis uncovered many recurring themes. Despite the uniqueness and individuality of each participant, many of their answers pointed to the causes of their inability to reach their desired success in high school. A clear gap exists between the expectations of my participants and their achieved academic success. Each participant believes that they can and should achieve higher marks, although most of them achieve below their own expectations. In this final section of the data analysis, I revisit and expand on the recurring themes present in the life-stories of my participants. To begin, I introduce the achievement gap and then analyze the recurring themes that follow.

Report cards and achievement gap

A follow-up telephone interview in July 2009 concerning my participant's academic success indicates that despite wanting to do better, only one participant actually improved. Only Jacob improved beyond his initial predicted grades. Otherwise, only Ajinder achieved his own earlier prediction of "*mostly straight A's and maybe one B*" (Ajinder, telephone interview, 9 July, 2009). The other five participants finished their semesters or reporting periods with lower overall grade point averages than they initially predicted. These results point to the existence of a gap between desired and achieved academic success. From the interview transcripts, I identify many recurring common themes, some of which may contribute to this gap.

Boredom

One of the most recurring themes is the shared sentiment of school being “boring.” When they must sit immobile in their seats for up to 80 minutes at a time, my teenage participants become restless and quickly lose attention. After a short period, they can become fidgety and talkative, which their teachers perceive as disrespectful and interruptive. This behaviour can become cyclical, leading to discipline from a teacher and eventually the administration. Mueller (2001) argues that this cycle of boredom-restlessness-punishment leads to some students acting out an unfortunate role in a culture of failure. Students who act-out out of boredom are labelled as trouble makers, and then begin to live up to the low expectations of others and of themselves, which is known as domain identification. The theory of domain identification argues that the mere realization that a negative stereotype exists about an individual or group can significantly hinder the performance of that individual or group in that domain (Smith & White, 2001).

Seeking teacher assistance.

My participants state that they rarely approach their teachers for help. In extreme cases, Ray asks his teachers for extra assignments, and every time, they willingly help him to complete the minimum requirements to pass. Dave says that his reluctance to approach teachers is due to his own perception that they would view him as “*a bad student [...] stupid*” because he does not understand the material (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008); thus, Dave has internalized a negative stereotype. It seems that to become a better student and shed this false negative stereotype, he would have to endure the stress and anxiety of approaching the teachers for help.

Additionally, none of my participants ever visited their school guidance counsellor. Every participant, as part of the curriculum of the Ministry of Education,

attends a Career and Personal Planning Class (CAPP). None of my participants possess the ability to set and achieve realizable goals. These students appear not to understand goal setting, despite attending a daily or twice-weekly class that specializes in personal planning. This is one of the gaps that exists between the actual instruction and actual student needs, and this gap is in part a product of the cultural gap that is not necessarily taken into account when teaching ethnic minority children (Yon, 2000).

Sibling involvement

With some exceptions, parents and siblings were equally unenthusiastic about helping my participants with their schoolwork. Ray receives homework help from his sisters, although he rarely turns to them for assistance, since he often does not complete his assigned work. Generally, the older siblings of my participants did not volunteer to help them. Jaime, whose sisters are not significantly older than him, do not discuss school, except for the occasional comment made in passing. Jaime does not approach his sisters for help because he believes they have “*forgotten or don’t know*” the material (Jaime, personal interview, January 11, 2009). The only time that Dave’s sisters help him with homework is when he asks them or they are appointed “*by dad*” to help. With the exception of Ajinder, none of my participant’s siblings actively engage with them to discuss the school day, schoolwork, or long-term school planning.

In the cases of many of my participants, their siblings do not facilitate their academic success. In other words, the family is not the first line of assistance for my participants, and so at this stage in the lives and needs of my participants, the family is an institution that is becoming secondary. My participants turn to their friends or peer associations for help and not to their siblings. In contrast to the family-rooted traditions

of a Punjabi culture, the institution of the family is not foremost in modern society. Post-modernists (Bauman, 2004; Hall, 1996) and post-traditional theorists (Giddens, 1991) argue that the institutions of family and religion—once prominent and central to individual lives in traditional societies—are no longer as prominent or important. In an age of globalization, traditional institutions such as the family are not as significant because modern institutions are different than any previous social order.

That siblings are not actively engaged in one another's lives may contribute to the fact that many of my participants did not consider their siblings to be role models. Again, only Ajinder provides a clear definition of why his older siblings are his role models. Dave says his older sibling is a role model, but he could not be more exact as to what attributes make her a role model. He wants to do better in school and tells me he studies daily, but only asks his sisters for help "*two or three times per semester*" (Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009). Neither Jaime nor Ray view their sisters as role models.

Kenny, Jacob, and Tejpal are the oldest sibling in their family, so they seek role models outside of their home. Kenny values his relationship with Sam, his cousin. Tejpal does not have a role model, and Jacob's role model (professional basketball star Kobe Bryant) is from outside the realm of his friends, family, and community. Male role models like Ajinder's brother or Kenny's cousin Sam are positive influences who provide a significant relationship of both academic assistance and male leadership. Positive role models such as these are lacking in the lives of my other five participants, which is unfortunate, since the traditional functionalist account of socialization perceives youth as the passive recipients of adult influences (Buckingham, 2008).

Parental roles.

Most of my participants' parents do not discuss goal setting or help their children with homework or any type of academic preparation. Of this group, only Kenny's parents are Canadian high school graduates. Still, they are not actively involved in assisting Kenny with his school work, even though he needs, and would benefit from, parental educational assistance. Clearly, he could benefit from any academic help, since a paid tutor has been advising him about his school work for both grade 8 and 9. This year, his cousin Sam is his tutor. Kenny also believes that he can manipulate his parents into thinking his work is complete: *"I just tell them the works done, they believe me"* (Kenny, personal interview, January 21, 2009). He can manipulate them because they do not employ a hands-on approach, despite sending him to tutors and encouraging his success.

None of my participants were supervised or held accountable for completing their nightly assigned homework. Their parents accepted their claims that the work is complete, even though it is not. My participants manipulate their parents by playing on their weaknesses—their lack of academic expertise about homework—and convincingly lie to them to avoid being forced to complete their homework. Goffman's (1959) "dramaturgical social interactionism" theory argues that people wear figurative masks and perform on the "front stage" to reach their ends, while only revealing their true identity/intentions on the "back stage." By lying to their parents, my participants show that they are masters at the front stage performance. Back stage, during our conversations for example, they felt comfortable telling me that they mislead their parents into believing that their incomplete work was complete.

Overwhelmingly in most cases, the mother deals with any and all school-related occurrences or occasions. From signing report cards to meeting teachers, the mother takes a front-line role. The father's involvement seems to be limited to one-time instances of alarm or to their role in reprimanding misbehaviour. Generally, fathers get involved after a school incident or a glaring need arises for them to visit the school. In Gidden's (1991) view of "late modern" societies, identity-defining beliefs such as the male role as provider and not nurturer remain integral even in diaspora communities. These first generation fathers maintain their former beliefs and traditions in their host society. Dave's and Jacob's fathers became involved in their son's school lives after school incidents, but they do not maintain this level of attention. Jacob isolates himself from his family because of his father's abrupt reaction to a school incident. The notion of fathers as providers and not nurturers is a Punjabi cultural value that results in a culture clash when the institutions of Western society require a higher level of father involvement (Gigi-Durham, 2004).

Punishment

Parental punishment was inconsistent among my participant group. With the exception of Ray being physically hit by his mother, these punishments range from absolutely nothing to the confiscation of video games. My participants' parents follow up their initial reaction with one or two weeks of vigilance, after which, they are absent once again from their child's educational life. Dave says that his parents, especially his *"dad is very involved in his kids lives,"* which with respect to the educational realm seems to imply an initial reaction to a teacher conference followed by infrequent follow-ups.

Image

Image also is an important and recurring theme. Dave says that image is not important, but follows this statement by describing himself and his family as “*whitewashed*.” Although Dave is the lone participant who did not aspire to wearing designer clothes, he did identify himself and his family as modern and Western. Dave values this identity, and goes as far as telling me that “*my mom is modern now, you saw her, she wears jeans and stuff*” (Dave, personal interview, January 14, 2009). As Giddens (1991) suggests, the “reflexive body” or the appropriation of bodily processes becomes immediately relevant to the identity that an individual promotes. By ascribing that his family fits in with the “white” or Western majority group, he isolates himself from the “non-white” minority group, and identifies himself and his family as having more in common with “white” than “brown.”

His image is to be unlike the other East Indian kids: “*I guess, my parent’s named us all English names, so that we could fit in better*” (Dave, personal interview, November 11, 2008). English names or Western names all reflect a desired image. By creating and maintaining an image, we signify our relationships to the members of that image-holding group. My participants use image to create the identities that explain their position in reference to others. Berry’s (1997) theory of acculturation argues that migration has psychological consequences on an immigrant’s identity. He suggests that the identities of individual immigrants and immigrant groups are innately challenged when they settle in a new society. This conflict is resolved through integration or assimilation. Dave’s comments show that his family is in the process of assimilation, since they place a higher value on the customs (for example, wearing jeans) of the host society.

Belonging

Fitting in and belonging are important to my participants. Many times, they spoke about wanting to be associated with the “*cool group*.” Most often, the “cool kids” are those who gain popularity for some distinguishable reason. Ray found the “*Jacks*” to be the cool kids, since he shares their anti-school views and participates in drug use. Jacob aspires to belong to the exact peer group of unfriendly males that bully him almost daily. Belonging is important for each participant. Kenny, Ajinder, and Jacob belong to at least one extracurricular activity. Dave returned to football on an intermittent practice schedule and is currently slotted to be on the football team full-time next season. Belonging is a connection to persons or a group, and is crucial to development (Sullivan, 1953). Ray, Jaime, and Tejpal are not involved in any organized extracurricular activities. This lack of involvement in sports by young Indo-Canadian males is not reflective of the general trend, since Kenny, Ray, and Jacob all comment that the sports teams in their respective schools have high rates of Indo-Canadian participation.

Time and again, my participants identify themselves as brown. They call themselves brown before they call themselves East Indian, Canadian, a high school student, Indo-Canadian, British Columbian, Sikh, Punjabi, or otherwise. Again, I come back to Gidden’s theory of structuration (1984) which argues that we are free agents to construct our own identity, even though we also are constrained by physical structures, in this case skin colour.

My participants are learning to learn for themselves. Since they are relatively unguided by their parents who also are trying to find their own place in Canadian society, my participants must make their own judgments about school and the world outside of

school. This is the plight of diaspora Indians. My group of second generation participants face a massive learning curve, since they are the first generation of Punjabi to be born in Canada; thus, they are students both in and outside of school. In the school environment, teachers are available to them, but outside of school, most of their parents are often absent with respect to educational matters, so my young participants must become their own teachers.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed and analyzed the data that I collected from my participants, including their recurring themes. I use the work of Anthony Giddens (1991) on post-traditional and late modern societies to understand the identity development of my second generation East Indian participants. I also examine the identity formation of the members of diaspora communities by using Berry's (1997) model of acculturation. I examine the educational identity of my participants by using the theories of Hall (1996) and Yon (2000) who both argue that identity is malleable and in constant development through negotiation with the social world.

In the next chapter, I reflect on my study and present some key understandings that emerged from this research. In addition, I consider strategies for increasing parental educational involvement in the lives of second generation East Indian high school students. Finally, I discuss the implications of my study for educational policy makers, and make recommendations for future research based on my findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I reflect on what this study suggests about the construction of the identities of young Indo-Canadian males as students and as second generation Indo-Canadians. Overall, this study makes an argument that its participants' identities are constructed more in relation to their daily social interactions—which include their roles as students and second generation Indo-Canadians—and less in relation to traditional Punjabi cultural values. In addition, I discuss the implications of this study for parents and educators, and conclude with suggestions for future research.

Constructing Identity in the Diaspora

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the difficulties that young, second generation Indo-Canadian male students face with respect to retaining a cultural bond to a far distant homeland and its Eastern traditions. The retention of an Eastern culture becomes even more difficult when these second generation youth are immersed in the practices of a Western society. The English public school was the setting in which my study participants developed their identities. Through their experiences with inclusion and exclusion, they exchanged and constructed their preferences, and developed their identities. Thus, to a great extent, through their social interactions in the school environment, they satisfied their needs for belonging and self-expression.

My participants' parents also experience a similar process of assimilation in their daily lives, most notably through employment obligations and family demands. In general, due to these obligations, parents have less time available to adequately build and pass along traditional cultural knowledge to their children. Additionally, some of the

parent groups immigrated when they were children themselves, and so they do not have a strong understanding of the culture of their homeland. They have reified Punjabi culture by transforming it to suit their needs, and tailored it to coincide with their daily demands. Diaspora migration has resulted in a reformulation of the homeland culture. Unlike Punjabi Sikhs living in the Punjab, the Indo-Canadian participants of the present study acknowledge their cultural belonging, but they do not embrace it as a central aspect of their lives. To find belonging in the West, they have moved Sikhism to a peripheral borderland.

The participants of the present study create their own identity in relation to the experiences of their daily lives. Friendships are especially crucial to them, and thus are an important aspect for understanding the identity construction among this group. Commonly, my participants claim a personal identity that reflects a sense of group belonging. For example, Jaime describes himself as “just one of the guys” and Tejpal believes that he was “one of the cool kids at school.” Many of my participants belong to groups arranged according to common bonds, which are a reflection of their current identities.

Tejpal goes to significant lengths to actively pursue his place among a desired peer group. He befriends the “table kids” and then separates himself from his former group of friends, the “hang around” group. Tejpal is frank in discussing that he is drawn to the “table kids” because of their reputation as having affluent home lives and as the “party” guys that regularly drink alcohol. The “table kids” boisterously share their stories with other classmates to solidify their reputations as “cool.”

For my participants, the peer group dynamic is important as a means to find their own identity as a student and as a member of the larger society. The peer group dictates a set of values, such as misbehaving by skipping classes or cooperation by belonging to a team. Peer groups determine acceptable extracurricular activities, and even pressure their members to become involved in them. For example, Jacob intentionally joins the high school basketball to befriend the bullies that torment him. Positive Indo-Canadian male influences (role models) are the archetypes for teaching life skills. Kenny's passion for sports introduces him to Manny, a senior level high school athlete. Manny sets a positive example of sportsmanship that Kenny currently emulates. Positive role models like Manny are not available to most of the participants of my study.

My participants identify with group norms rather than creating noticeable distinctions between themselves and their group. In addition, their identification with the Punjabi culture is almost nonexistent. The exception is that all of my participants attend schools in densely concentrated Punjabi neighbourhoods, and therefore maintain friendships with other Indo-Canadian boys. The core identity of my participants is intrinsically linked to others. Individuality is rare, although glimpses are visible in my participants' extracurricular activities; for example, Dave and Kenny play sports that most of their close school friends do not play. Peer groups not only provide their status in school but also become their preferred identity, and in every participant interview, group identification was irrespective of my participants' academic success.

Overwhelmingly, my participants discuss their motivations for academic success, although most, except for Ajinder and Jacob, are not able to reach the grade point average goals that they set for themselves. Even though much of this lack of success is directly

related to my participants' inability to set and manage their own educational goals, their parents' inability or unwillingness to follow up on academic progress are also contributing factors. A dire need exists for parents to be more involved in the classroom and with evening homework. By and large, since they were in elementary school, my participants have been responsible for their own school work without any parental supervision.

Parents

In the lives and educational identities of my participant students, parents and family play varying roles. Clearly, each participant in my study was essentially responsible for completing and submitting their homework without any parental intervention. Even vigilant parents, such as Jacob's, did not supervise homework or other academic activities on a consistent basis. Another notable factor was the role of mothers and the absence of fathers in their child's educational processes. Overwhelmingly, mothers seemed to be almost solely responsible for the care of children. As these boys mature into young men, the daily responsibilities still fall to the mothers care. With few exceptions, the mothers play the role of both parents, taking responsibility for driving the children to and from school and extracurricular events, talking to teachers, handling discipline, and other school- and home-related duties. Clearly, fathers take a backseat role in the administration and supervision of their children's education.

Most troubling is the willingness of parents to accept, at face value, their child's claims that school homework is finished, even if the child does not complete or even attempt their evening school work. My participants are left to their own devices to actually complete their homework. Most often, the inability of a parent to help their

children with homework is the parent's own lack of education, which is a by-product of diaspora migration coupled with the generational gap.

Educators

Educators and career counsellors must recognize the large home-school gap that persists within this population of young Indo-Canadian male high school students, which the data of the present study makes evident. A general aspect of my participants' difficulties with school is an inability to accomplish small tasks, including the setting of manageable goals. In the absence of parental support or a source (for example, an academic role model) who can function as a guide for educational progression, my participants find it difficult to achieve educational success. An absence of short-term goals can result in students viewing schoolwork as nothing more than an arduous and cumbersome task.

Canadian cities as diverse in composition as those in my study are not uncommon. Thus, an increasing ethnic and cultural diversity creates a need for educators to encourage and embrace the involvement of parents from minority communities. Perhaps, one positive strategy to address this need is parental professional development. For example, professional development workshops can empower parents to help their children, and to develop the confidence they need to voice their concerns about their children's educational progress. These workshops can teach parents simple management strategies, such as how to design effective evening homework schedules, and can explain the mechanisms of dealing positively with their child's misbehaviour. Parents also can be taught how to create an open dialogue with their children, instead of raising their voices,

and as a result undermining their important role as a safe and reliable source for their children to discuss their problems with school.

Schools also can benefit from professional parent development days held in the school environment. Restricting a session to parents for whom English is a second language could ease this group's discomfort about coming to the school to participate in these workshops. When parents do not feel like outsiders, they are better equipped to participate in the education of their kids. By openly inviting parents to these workshops and making them feel comfortable in the school setting, the commonly held idea that school is the teacher's domain can be changed. I believe that Punjabi parents who already can speak English fluently can become translators for other Punjabi parents whose English is not as strong, and thus help to develop a community of parents to work together for the educational success of their children. By working with the school, these parents who are fluent in both languages can translate school flyers into Punjabi and record the minutes of school meetings in Punjabi. Handouts in both languages can help parents with educational strategies they can implement at home. Another potential key strategy for improving the educational success of young Indo-Canadian male high school students would be to hold evening events like Punjabi Day where parents and grandparents are invited to discuss strategies with teachers, translators, and graduate students in Education.

Future Research

I believe that we need more debate and research on the use of terminology that defines us as "something" before Canadian, for example, as Indo-Canadian. Are these terms always mutually inclusive, or do situations or environments exist in which I am just

an “Indian” or just a “Canadian”? In what context can this debate move forward? The term “host state” also is a contentious source of debate, especially as Canada’s minority populations continue to expand faster than the majority Anglo-Saxon population. As a self-identified Canadian, am I currently a member of the host population? As the minority population becomes the majority population, will the same principles of social convention apply?

I believe that future research into second generation diaspora communities could benefit from a greater emphasis on textual interpretation, since these kind of studies are concerned with the genuine voice of the participants being researched. In addition, social science research needs to be conducted so that common Canadians can understand it and benefit from its findings, so it is not exclusively addressed to the detached intellectuals of high academia. It should be the intention of research to directly benefit the participant group. My intention in doing this present study is to share my data and findings with the participant families, and to engage dialogue from which we can mutually benefit.

A need also exists to continue research that seeks to understand the changing face of Canadian society. My conclusions are a product of my understanding, and my interpretation of that understanding. I believe that my data and research conclusions could be reanalyzed through a different epistemological lens, a strategy which is important for building knowledge through using alternative points of view. Research that seeks to understand the perspective of Indo-Canadian parents with respect to the education of their children would also complement and expand our understanding of the Indo-Canadian diaspora.

It would be interesting for future researchers to compare the data obtained from my participant minority group to the larger majority group so to determine the differences, if any, of identity development across this age group. I believe that educational research that aims to understand current issues within secondary school populations is beneficial to the future positive development of Canada.

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