Walking between two worlds: The bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian Canadian women

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December, 2003

Thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Ph.D.

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-98284-X
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-98284-X

Abstract

Second-generation East Indian women represent a visible ethnic minority group in need of culturally sensitive research to facilitate an understanding of their integration into Canadian society. There is a scarcity of systematic qualitative inquires into the experience of this contemporary second-generation population within a North American context. Hence, the primary objective of this study is to understand the bicultural experience of a select group of second-generation East Indian women using a focused ethnography as a research tool. The central questions guiding this inquiry are (a) What are the salient aspects in the subjective experience of second-generation East Indian women as they grow up within both an East Indian and Canadian cultural context? (b) What are some of the challenges they face as a result of their biculturalism, and (c) How do they negotiate these challenges?

The sample pool consisted of 16 second-generation East Indian women between the ages of 20 and 40 years who were either working or attending university and who were English speaking. Data collection focused on individual and follow-up interviews, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes. A latent content analysis was used to analyze the interview data and focused on looking for general themes, patterns and trends in the data set. Results suggest that the bicultural experience of this population is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that reflects the intersection of multiple identities including race, ethnicity, gender and cultural values.

Résumé

La seconde génération de femmes indiennes représente un groupe ethnique minoritaire nécessitant une recherche culturelle délicate afin de faciliter une compréhension de leur intégration dans la société canadienne. Il y a une pénurie de système qualificatif sur l'expérience de cette population contemporaine de seconde génération dans un contexte nord-américain. Par conséquent, le premier objectif de cette étude est de comprendre l'expérience biculturelle d'un groupe choisi de femmes indiennes de seconde génération en utilisant une ethnographie focalisée comme outil de recherche. Les principales questions qui ont guidées cette enquête sont: (a) quels sont les aspects saillants dans l'expérience subjective de la femme indienne de seconde génération quand elles grandissent dans un contexte culturel indien et canadien?; (b) quels sont certains des défis qu'elles doivent assumer en ayant un bagage multiculturel?; et c) comment négocient-elles ces défis?

L'échantillonnage s'est composé de 16 femmes indiennes de seconde génération âgées entre 20 et 40 ans soit en milieu du travail ou à l'université et d'expression anglaise. La collecte de données s'est concentrée sur l'individu et les entrevues de suivis, chacune d'une durée variant de 60 à 90 minutes. Une analyse du contenu a été employée pour analyser les données d'entrevue et concentrée sur la recherche de thème, de modèles et de tendances générales. Les résultats démontrent que l'expérience biculturelle de cette population est un phénomène complexe et à facettes multiples qui reflète le croisement des identités multiples comprenant la race, l'appartenance ethnique, le sexe et les valeurs culturelles.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents. First, my mother, Nirmal Justin. She has been a role model and source of inspiration in my life. She taught me to believe that I could accomplish anything through determined persistence. Since my childhood, she taught me the path to success was through education. I obviously took this lesson to heart, because I am the first member of my family to pursue a Ph.D. Mom, from you I have a sense of who I am as an East Indian woman, and thanks to you I have all the tools I need to succeed in this life. I am grateful for your unfailing support and confidence.

Second, to my father, Edwin Justin, I know you have gazed upon me from heaven, and I hope you are proud of who I am, and what I have accomplished in my life. This is dedicated to your memory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis has been a long journey, but one that I have not taken alone. I am forever grateful, and humbled by the support of my family, friends and colleagues.

My immediate and extended family have been role models, and steadfast supporters throughout this process. My mother Nirmal Justin, my sister and brother-in-law Edwina and Bill Boudreau, and my aunts Saraswati and Satya Mall; have watched over me, given me strength, and never let me falter as I have endeavoured to pursue my dream.

To my thesis supervisor, Dr. Ted Maroun and members of my committee, Dr. Jan Morse, and Dr. Jaswant Guzder, your mentoring and guidance have been invaluable. In sharing your knowledge, you let some of it become mine. To Mme. Diane Bernier, the administrative secretary in our department, you have repeatedly "saved my life".

To the women who participated in this study, gave generously of their time, and welcomed me into their homes, your stories are the heart and soul of this project.

I am indebted to everyone at the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology at the University of Alberta. You provided me with the facilities, tools, and learning opportunities to bring this project to completion. A special thanks to Jude Spiers for graciously welcoming me to the Institute, and to Jan Morse for her mentoring and supervision. Thank you for your faith in me, for helping me to realize my potential, and for teaching me what it meant to do qualitative research.

There have been people who have come in and out of my life throughout this journey but some who have stuck with me even when the going got tough. It is these

friendships that have been an endless source of support throughout my life. To Shawna Atkins, Judith Norton, Xenia Georgiadou, and Giovanna Buscemi, my friends, colleagues, and partners in crime. We first met in graduate school, but soon became great friends who shared each other's struggles, triumphs and victories. You have stood by my side through thick and thin, and I can't wait to see what life post Ph.D. holds for each of us. To Monika Rudnik, I could never have imagined that a chance meeting in kindergarten would have led to such a wonderful friendship that has already spanned 32 years. To Jan Anderson and Michael Henderson, thank you for helping me to become the person I am today. To Kim Hacking, Guylaine Chartier, Martin Ouellet, Suzie Buscemi, Lynn Walden, and Jenny Schaeff, you have provided me with the emotional comfort and spiritual support that can only come from close relationships. Your faith in me has helped me stay the course.

To Anna-Lisa Ciccocioppo, Dr. Sharon Crozier, Dr. Judy Chew and Dr. Ann Laverty, women I am happy to call my friends and colleagues; thank you for cheering me on over this past year.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to all the women who have come before me. They have shown incredible strength, resilience and courage in pursuing their dreams, and paving the way for women like me: daughters of immigrant parents.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Multicultural counselling has been described as the fourth force in psychology, and the past two decades has seen a proliferation of research on multicultural issues in the field of counselling psychology (Pedersen, 1991; Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999). The growing body of literature regarding visible ethnic minority individuals has enhanced our understanding of issues of ethnic identity, cultural values, acculturation and adaptation. Understanding how specific ethnic minority groups and individuals situate and position themselves in the context of the larger North American population continues to be an area of interest for scholars, academics and mental health practitioners. Fuertes and Gretchen (2001), assert that several gaps remain in our understanding of ethnic minority issues and advocate that "the significance of discerning the complexities of internalized aspects of cultural group membership and clients interpretations and meanings of their values and beliefs is emphasized beyond the simple appreciation of client group membership or affiliation" (p. 532). Therefore, clarifying how individuals construct, situate and negotiate their cultural values, and ethnic identity becomes a critical issue for the counselling profession as it continues to meet the needs of increasingly diverse clientele.

Canadian Context

The liberalization of immigration laws in 1967 resulted in changing the face of the North American population through the settlement of an increasing number of ethnic immigrants (Arthur & Stewart, 2001; Esses & Gardner, 1996; Walker, 1992). We see evidence of this in the multiethnic population of our urban centres, in the diversity of

religious institutions such as mosques and temples and in the popular culture in terms of music, fashion and food. The Canadian population is a clear example of this change. One example of this change is evident in the Canadian census data (1996) that indicates the top three source countries representing current immigrants include China, India and Pakistan (www.cic.gc.ca). Notably, South Asian East Indians (people from the subcontinent of India) constitute the second largest segment of the current immigrant population. For purposes of clarity and to avoid confusion with the ethnic classification of South East Asian, South Asian Indians will hereafter be referred to as East Indians.

As a community of practitioners and scholars, we have a limited body of literature that addresses the diversity of the East Indian community in Canada or the ways in which different segments of this population adapt and negotiate Canadian society. Canadian research that relates to East Indians has typically focused on issues from the perspective of first-generation parents, particularly in terms of intergenerational conflicts (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastava, 1985; Kurian, 1992; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981); assimilation and acculturation (Aycan & Kanungo, 1998; Buchignani, et al., 1985: Kurian, 1991), and gender role expectations regarding social relationships and dating (Basran, 1993; Buchignani, et al., 1985; Dhruvarajan, 1993; Ghosh, 1981; Naidoo, 1980). However, few studies have reflected the standpoint of second-and-later generation East Indian individuals, particularly adult women. The general definition of second-generation used in the literature refers to individuals born in North America or who arrived here in early childhood, hence their formative years and socialization is based in North American society.

Second-Generation Individuals

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the need for research regarding second-generation individuals (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Boyd & Grieco, 1998; Perlman & Waldinger, 1997; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Waters, 1999). Portes (1997, p. 814) asserts:

> The case for second-generation as a "strategic research site" is based on two features. First, the long-term effects of immigration for the host society depend less on the fate of first-generation immigrants than on their descendants. Patterns of adaptation of the first-generation set the stage for what is to come, but issues such as the continuing dominance of English, the growth of a welfare dependent population, the resilience or disappearance of culturally distinct ethnic enclaves, and the decline or growth of ethnic intermarriages will be decided among its children and grandchildren.

Hence focusing on issues of second-generation East Indians becomes an important consideration to understanding the ways in which they and other ethnic minorities integrate into North American society. Portes (1997) also argues that the significance of studying the new-second-generation helps to challenge existing concepts and models of ethnic identity, acculturation and adaptation of immigrants; concepts which have been primarily based on the immigration of early European immigrants. He summarizes this position in his argument that "the experiences of this present second-generation cannot be inferred from those of children of earlier European immigrants" (p. 814).

American Context

In the United States, several quantitative studies have addressed the issues of contemporary second-generation individuals from various ethnic groups such as segmented assimilation (Zhou, 1997a, 1997b), adaptation (Boyd & Grieco, 1998; Gans, 1992; Waters, 1999; Zhou, 1997a, 1997b;), acculturation (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Kasinitz, Battle & Miyares, 2001; Zhou, 2001), family (Mindel, Habenstein & Wright Jr., 1988; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Waters, 1999) and cultural values conflicts (Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999; Inman, Ladany, Constantine & Morano, 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999). However, adult second-generation East Indians as an ethnic group are inadequately represented in these inquiries.

Statement of the Problem

The discourse on visible ethnic minorities in North America has typically focused on issues of ethnicity, race, adaptation and acculturation of African-American, Asian, Latino, and Hispanic populations and scarcely included the East Indian community in this dialogue. The scattering of literature on the East Indian community in North America has typically addressed issues of immigration, acculturation, socialization, cultural value conflicts, and issues of racism and discrimination from the standpoint of first-generation immigrant families and adolescent children. The experience of East Indian women is often subsumed under those of males, the family or the larger ethnic group and not represented as a distinct experience (Khan, 2002; Maira, 1998). Existing studies often represent the East Indian community as a homogeneous whole, thereby ignoring the diversity of regional language, religious, educational, immigration histories and social class that define this community. The current study aims to bridge these gaps by

exploring the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women in Canada from their standpoint (i.e., not their families) regarding the social and cultural issues that have influenced their lives.

Understanding the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Like other visible ethnic minority women, their lives are represented by the intersection and overlap of identities that include race, culture, ethnicity, social class, education and gender. The cross roads of these various influences can be a source of internal and external conflict in their lives but also serves as a driving force in the construction of their identities and positioning in Canadian society.

Jambunathan, Burts, and Pierce (2000) describe biculturalism as " the ability of a person to function effectively in more than one culture and also to switch roles back and forth as the situation changes" (p. 396). Sue and Sue (1999) offer a similar point of view but also emphasize the fact that cultural value conflicts can arise for these individuals. They describe biculturalism as the fact that minorities in North America inherit two cultural traditions. Bicultural conflicts can arise when an individual holds membership in two cultural groups that present conflicting value systems (societal norms, values, and attitudes). The conflict an individual experiences may be related to positively emphasizing or implementing the specific values, behaviours, norms, and customs of one culture over another (p. 104). Hence, as second-generation women who have been socialized in two cultural worlds, they can simultaneously belong to both worlds yet not fit in either. Hence, these women live in the margins or in between space that exemplifies the reality of being a visible ethnic minority woman in Canada.

In addition to their bicultural identity, the subjective experience of second-generation East Indian women is of notable interest given the priority first-generation parents place on the retention of their ethnic and cultural values such as socialization, dating, and gender role expectations (Aycan, & Kanungo, 1998; Das & Kemp, 1997; Inman, et al., 2001). The prioritization of these values and attitudes by East Indian families has direct implications on how effectively second-generation women can integrate and manage their biculturalism.

As a concept, biculturalism encompasses issues such as the acculturative process, cultural values and other related issues that the lives and identity of second-generation East Indian women. Therefore, it represents an issue that requires more focused attention in the Canadian multicultural counselling literature. Using an emic standpoint allows these women to describe and define relevant issues in their lives and to develop a rich and contextual understanding of their cultural experience.

Introduction to the Study

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the objective of this study is to examine the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women who grew up in the prairie provinces of Canada. The premise of this inquiry is primarily based on the rationale that the cultural and social experience of second-generation East Indian women in Canada is a relatively unexplored domain. Furthermore, understanding their experience from a subjective perspective will allow for an in-depth understanding of how they negotiate cultural values, situate and position themselves in Canadian society. A focused ethnography and unstructured interview format was used with the objective of discovering salient issues and themes that defined their cultural experience.

Purpose of the Study

Being a visible ethnic minority woman in Canada is connected to negotiating multiple identities and confronting numerous tensions and challenges based on racial status, gender, and cultural expectations. The aim of this study is to develop a rich and contextual understanding of the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women from their standpoint; a perspective that allows them to define and give meaning to their experiences. An additional goal of this inquiry is to contribute to the development of a rich set of qualitative studies pertaining to the experience of second-generation East Indian women in Canada.

Biculturalism is used as a conceptualizing framework for their experience because it reflects the socialization of second-generation women in more than one culture. Consequently, it inherently assumes significant aspects of acculturation, assimilation, adaptation, ethnic identity and cultural values. Therefore, examining their experience from the broader perspective of biculturalism permits a discovery-oriented approach to understanding their subjective experience. Using a broader concept allows the researcher to remain open to information participants define as meaningful in constructing their experience, rather than imposing a singular framework or model from which to understand their experience. Another objective of this study is to include East Indian women in the dialogue and discourse on visible ethnic minority women in Canada.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this inquiry included a) What are the salient elements of the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women as they grow up in an East Indian and Canadian cultural context? b) What are the challenges of biculturalism?, and c) How do they negotiate these challenges?

Original Contribution to Science

Systematic qualitative studies focusing on the bicultural or acculturative experience of second-and-later generation East Indian women in Canada are scarce. East Indians as an ethnic minority population are also inadequately represented in the research literature or even the popular media. As a research and counselling community, gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how these women construct, define, and negotiate cultural values and tensions in their daily lives offers a starting point from which to understand their integration into Canadian society. This study aims to begin to fill this gap by using a focused ethnographic approach to examine how a select group of second-generation East Indian women situate and position themselves in their lives and within Canadian society, and negotiate cultural tensions they face as visible ethnic minority women.

Significance of the Study

As a community of researchers and practitioners, we rely on literature and research to inform and guide the way we think, teach and work with clients. In order to deepen our understanding of the cultural background of ethnic minority individuals in our classrooms, clinical practices, and as research participants we need to broaden the scope of the literature that informs our thinking. The body of literature pertaining to ethnic

minority groups in North America has grown in recent decades, however there remains a need to extend the literature to include the subjective experience of different ethnic groups. Second-generation East Indian women represent an ethnic group in need of culturally sensitive research to facilitate an understanding of their integration into the mosaic of Canadian society.

In order to understand how East Indian women identify and create a space for themselves in Canadian society and the factors that shape and influence their decisions on identity issues, we need to first develop a substantive body of knowledge that addresses their subjective experiences and the context of their daily lives. This study aims to contribute to developing this awareness by illuminating the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women from a Canadian perspective. Understanding the ways in which race, ethnicity, cultural values and gender intersect in their lives and the ways they negotiate their multiple identities can offer a new way of conceptualizing the experience of visible ethnic minority women in Canada. More specifically, these variables also intersect in the lives of other visible ethnic minority women. Therefore, developing an understanding of these issues from the perspective of second-generation East Indian women can facilitate an awareness of how these variables influence the subjective experience of other ethnic women. The fundamental contribution of this study is to the field of counselling psychology and Canadian multicultural literature. This study aims to include East Indian women in the multicultural discourse within these disciplines. In sum, the findings of this study expects to serve several long term goals (a) to serve as a building block and contribute to establishing a rich set of qualitative research on East Indian women in Canada, (b) to include East Indian women in the dialogue and discourse

on visible ethnic minority women in Canada, and (c) to promote a deeper understanding of how multiple identities influence, define and construct the lives of second-generation East Indian women and other ethnic minority women. This study, as well as future research on this ethnic community can serve to inform and guide our work as practitioners, academics, and scholars, and also serve us as citizens living in a diverse and multicultural society.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter serves as a review of relevant discourses that have informed and guided my thinking throughout this research inquiry. First, I will offer a brief summary of the immigration history of the East Indian population in North America, particularly Canada. Qualitative research is founded on the principle of context. Hence, presenting a brief history of East Indian immigration to Canada will serve to present a broader picture from which to understand the settlement of immigrants, and their relationship with the larger Canadian society.

A discussion of the significant issues described in the acculturative literature regarding first-generation families will offer a backdrop from which to contextualize the lives of second-generation women and the nature of the cultural value conflicts they experience. Negotiating these challenges lays the foundation for bicultural identity development.

The final component of this literature review will address the concepts of hybrid, multiple and situational identities as concepts that reflect the complexity of identity negotiations in the lives of second-generation East Indian women. These women represent an interesting case for examination in light of the current debates about second-generation acculturation given the multiple influences that define their identity such as social class, immigration history, educational qualifications, and religious diversity. Although the East Indian community is often perceived as a homogenous whole, there exists a tremendous heterogeneity within this community based on religious affiliation, regional languages, immigration history, social class, educational, and occupational

achievement. This heterogeneity serves as a challenge to the traditional unidimensional conceptualizations of ethnic minority individuals.

It is important to note that the literature on acculturation literature does not use consistent language, definitions or constructs across studies examining ethnic identity, cultural values and so forth. The ambiguity in the literature makes it difficult to compare and evaluate concepts across studies. Therefore alternating between the concepts of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural values in the literature review reflects the use of multiple concepts in describing the acculturative experience of ethnic immigrants.

Summary of East Indian Immigration

Documentation of East Indian immigrants to Canada dates back to 1904 when approximately forty-five Punjabi Sikh men immigrated to Vancouver. By 1908, approximately 5,200 East Indian immigrants had settled in British Columbia, which is cited as the first port of entry for Asian immigrants (Buchignani, 1984). However, in 1908 due to political pressure and public outcry, the federal government effectively banned East Indian immigrants from entering Canada, even the wives and children of those who were legally here. This unilateral legislation required that all immigrants arriving to Canada had to arrive on one continuous voyage from their country of origin (Sampat-Mehta, 1984; Walker, 1992). A continuous and uninterrupted journey between India and Canada was impossible at the time due to the established travel routes, therefore, East Indian immigration decreased dramatically. In addition, East Indians who were established in Canada were subjected to discriminatory legislation that limited their legal rights in terms of political, social and economic participation in Canadian society. For example, they were not permitted to own property or run a private business, serve in

public office or have the freedom to choose their place of residence. The social segregation of East Indians fundamentally resulted in keeping them at a lower social, economic and political position in Canadian society (Buchignani, 1984). Nonetheless, East Indians managed to prosper despite the numerous economic and political limitations they faced.

Between 1947 and 1948, East Indians gained the right to vote in British Columbia and this legal recognition began a chain of events that eventually resulted in lifting many of the bans they faced. It was not until 1967 that all racial, ethnic and national restrictions were removed from Canadian immigration laws and this liberalized policy resulted in a second wave of East Indian immigrants entering Canada. This second wave of immigrants is often referred to as the post-1965 immigrants. Early East Indian immigrants mainly consisted of uneducated or working class labourers who worked in the lumber industry in British Columbia, while the post-1965 immigrants often consisted of middle-class, educated, and professionally qualified individuals (Buchignani, 1984; Das & Kemp, 1997; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987, 1988; Wakil, et al. 1981). This group of immigrants is frequently described in the literature as a "model minority", a label shared with other Asian immigrants (Sue & Sue, 1999). The label refers to the fact that these immigrants are considered to be hard working, educated individuals who easily integrate into a middle class life style and are not perceived to have the same social problems as some other ethnic groups, namely inner-city African American communities.

Although in recent years they have been perceived to be a model minority, historically, they have also been the subject of negative stereotypes. Buchignani (1984) sites the lack of accommodation on both individual and institutional levels towards East

Indians from the dominant population. Stereotypes have been based on racial differences to some degree, but have also been a function of cultural and social practices in terms of food, language, arranged marriages, and styles of dress. Other stereotypes have also centred on the perception of personality factors that East Indians are socially distant and therefore unfriendly and are not committed to accepting a Canadian way of life because of their investment in maintaining cultural or religious traditions from their country of origin. Hence, the East Indian community has had a contentious history and relationship with the dominant culture throughout their settlement in Canada. Mainstream society's attitudes and perceptions of ethnic groups and immigrants has become more tolerant in the past three decades, however, negative stereotypes continue to remain strongly embedded in the perceptions, attitudes and interactions of mainstream society. Lessinger's (1995) analysis of negative stereotypes and racial attitudes is attributed to the post-1965 infusion of people of colour, namely Asian, Latin, and Caribbean into the North American population. The increasing presence of these ethnic and racial groups forced North Americans to change their views on race and ethnicity from a predominantly polarized classification of two racial groups (i.e., dominant Whites and inferior Blacks). The arrival of new immigrants (i.e., Brown) did not fall into this Black-White dichotomy and were often lumped together in an intermediate position. Thus, a racial hierarchy emerged, which often placed Asian and Latinos as less esteemed than Whites and more esteemed than Blacks, but still within a classification of "minority group". East Indians as a group were often categorized under the broader classification of Asian, and hence, were perceived as falling into a similar intermediate racial category.

The history of East Indians in Canada demonstrates a complex positioning and relationship with the host culture that continually shifts between acceptance, marginalization and tolerance of differences. The retention and maintenance of cultural values and traditional practices continues to be a strong factor that sets this community apart from the mainstream.

Retention of Cultural Values

First Generation East Indian Immigrants

The acculturative experience of post-1965 immigrants has been the main focus of research on East Indians in North America. Issues that have been explored emphasize: socialization values (Patel, Power & Bhavnagri, 1996; Wakil, et al., 1981); acculturation issues (Aycan & Kanungo, 1998; Ghuman, 1991); adaptation issues (Ghuman, 1997; Naidoo, 1980; Ghosh, 1994); socio-cultural issues (Basran, 1993; Dhruvarajan, 1993; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Segal, 1991); and intergenerational conflicts (Inman, et al., 2001; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Moore-Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Alemeida, & Weltman, 1992). A common theme within these studies is the strong desire that many first-generation East Indian immigrants place on maintaining a distinct ethnic and cultural identity. This desire to maintain a distinct ethnic identity is manifested in the maintenance of cultural values, traditions and practices (Das & Kemp, 1997; Dhruvarajan, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey 1987, 1988). While first-generation individuals, particularly the post-1965 cohort successfully adapt and acculturate, they demonstrate a selective acculturation (Das & Kemp, 1997; Naidoo, 1985; Wakil, et al., 1981). While they may adopt North American styles of dress, etiquette and social mannerisms, they generally tend to hold onto their food preferences, family ideology and values, and religious beliefs and

practices (Das & Kemp, 1997, p. 28). Research suggests that behavioural aspects of a new culture are acquired more rapidly than cultural value aspects of a new culture, and values are the most resistant to change (Kim, et al., 1999). The concept of behavioural versus cultural values acculturation can be applied to later-generation immigrants as well, demonstrating the salience of ethnic identity and cultural values and their resistance to change.

Das Gupta (1997) notes in her case studies with East Indian girls that first-generation parents were often described as being "more East Indian than the East Indians in India". Das and Kemp (1997, p 28) cite:

> in The Discovery of India, Nehru (1946) remarked that India clings to her children like an overprotective mother. Wherever a certain number of South Asian settle in this country, they try to recreate some formal and informal institutions from their countries of origin. Often regional and sectarian affiliations are overcome and a larger South Asian identity emerges.

The first-generations' desire to maintain a strong connection and alliance with their country of origin is also attributed to the fact that upon immigration these individuals did not have an ethnic or social community to connect with, to recreate a sense of familiarity. Hence, their re-creation of community for themselves and their children is a process Das Gupta (1997, p. 578) refers to as the "invention of the authentic immigrant family" and argues that first-generation parents:

> Carefully cultivated a high, pristine version of the East Indian culture among the educated middle class in a newly, independent, artificially unified India. In the United States, this interpretation facilitated a stark contrast against their

> stereotypes of " American" culture, which by their definition was denigrate...the first-generation in many ways drew on colonial and nationalist rewriting of East Indian history which glorified the Vedic past. The interpretations of East Indian culture promoted by these immigrants re-inscribed the antagonism between the East and the West.

Furthermore, as first generation immigrants were confronted with racial and class stereotypes whether they wanted to be or not, and immediately classified as foreigners based on their brown skin, foreign accents and names. In their country of origin they were neither considered foreigners, minorities and or lower class. Lessinger (1995) comments that as a collective the Indian community rejected these racial classifications and accepted to adopt an ethnic classification because it reduced the negative stereotypes but also allowed them to stress their distinctive history, customs and practices (p. 6).

While a source of comfort and familiarity for first-generation immigrants, the adherence, retention and maintenance of traditional cultural values is the primary source of tension and stress for their second-generation children (Segal, 1991).

East Indian Cultural Values

The East Indian culture is premised on a set of values and beliefs about human beings and relationships between individuals that is founded in a long history and shaped by multiple influences such as Hinduism and mythology (Guzder & Krishna, 1991). While East Indians represent a heterogeneous group that comes from vastly different traditions, customs and regions there are several commonalities with regard to cultural values; namely a collectivist orientation. Generally speaking, a high premium is placed on cultural values such as conformity, and interdependence, meaning that the needs of the

family are served before those of the individual. The family structure places men as head of the household, primary wage earners and decision makers and relationships within the family are structured hierarchically. Families are the corner stone of the East Indian culture and living within an extended family structure is also commonplace. Respect for authority is valued and children are expected to be obedient (Dhruvarajan, 1993). Their primary role is to respect and honour their family through good behaviour, high academic and occupational achievement. Education is highly valued within the East Indian community and children are strongly encouraged to pursue higher education (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). Furthermore, the educational and occupational achievement of children brings status to the family. Gender roles and expectations are also markedly defined, and female children are more sheltered and protected by their families. They have limited personal freedom and exposure to external social influences, while male children are valued, and afforded more personal freedom in their lives. Female children are also expected to demonstrate chaste, modest and demure behaviour. These behaviours are seen as a direct reflection of a girl's upbringing and therefore reflect family honour and reputation (Ghosh, 1994; Lessinger, 1995). Female children also carry the responsibility of transmitting cultural values onto the next generation, and hence, are raised with strong family and care-taking orientation (Das Gupta, 1998; Lessinger, 1995). Arranged marriage is another element of the cultural values system that is maintained upon immigration and is a practice that remains culturally entrenched in later-generation individuals (Lessinger, 1995). These cultural values are offered as a generalization of East Indian cultural values, however a variety of factors such as religion, regional practices, education, acculturation levels and social class influence how rigidly these

values are practiced and enforced in individual families. Patel et al.'s (1996) assert, that traditional families are more likely to demonstrate more structured and rigid cultural values. An interesting finding of this study revealed the differential roles of mothers versus fathers. While women in the East Indian culture are seen as the transmitters and holders of cultural values, Patel et al. (1996) findings revealed that mothers also encouraged more North American traits in their children as compared to fathers. Fathers appeared to want to protect their children (particularly girls) from North American influences and instil stronger East Indian cultural values. Data from Naidoo's (1985) study further support this conclusion, and assert that first generation East Indian women selectively adopt western values. Naidoo's study revealed that first generation East Indian women are strongly entrenched in traditional cultural values that encompass the home, family, marriage and religious values. To a lesser extent they also retain traditional values regarding dress and language. However, they demonstrate a clear openness and willingness to selectively adapt to educational opportunities and opportunities in general that exist in Canadian culture for women. Participants also favourably viewed the women's liberation movement in the west, and were willing to adopt a Canadian style of living and dress, as well as speaking English in the home. Extrapolating this data to how these mothers would raise their second-generation daughters, suggests that they would also encourage their second-generation daughters to make use of the educational freedoms and opportunities available to women in Canadian society; thereby contributing to the development of a bicultural identity in their daughters.

Adherence to traditional cultural values represents the foundation of the ethnic and cultural identity of first-generation individuals. These values have significant

implications for second-generation female children because they offer a sharp contrast to the liberties and attitudes engendered in a western value system. Western values generally promote ideals of independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency versus a strong collectivist orientation in eastern cultures (Carter, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1999). Second-generation females describe feeling that old world rules and expectations are still rigidly upheld for them (Das Gupta, 1998). The cultural expectations described above are at centre stage for emotional tensions between generations and cultural values conflicts experienced by second-generation East Indian women (Das Gupta, 1998). These issues also form the basis of continuous self-questioning and difficulty in the personal decision-making process for second-generation women.

Common Issues of Cultural Conflict

The centre of the tensions in intergeneration conflicts fundamentally rests on the push and pull between traditional East Indian values versus the assimilation of western values. The more rigid gender roles and expectations for East Indian girls within their families such as being responsible for the majority of house work, having limited personal and social freedoms and having their activities supervised or monitored causes strain for many women. Agarwal (1991) offers the description of a good East Indian girl as "the one who does not date, is shy, delicate and marries an East Indian man of her parents' choosing" (as cited in Das Gupta, 1998, p. 957). This image contrasts sharply with the expectations of North American girls who are encouraged to date, be independent, assertive, and marry for love.

The research literature commonly cites several issues as sources of intergenerational tension and conflict, particularly in traditional East Indian families. Pettys and Balgopal's

(1998) study identified the six major sources of tensions for East Indian adolescent girls (a) gender roles, (b) respect versus assertiveness, (c) power shifts between generations, (d) life cycle issues, (e) triangulation between the three generations (children, parents and grandparents), and (f) westernization. Traditional gender roles included having early curfews; restrictions on dating and social interactions were cited as additional sources of conflict for girls. The issue of respect versus assertiveness cantered on how much assertiveness is tolerated by parents. Girls struggled with deciding on how to disagree with their elders and not be perceived as disrespectful. Power shifts reflected questioning how much influence and control extended family members should have over an adolescent's behaviour, and how much control the individual could exercise in making choices and decisions for her future. The question of life cycle issues focused on evaluating ways of incorporating the best of both worlds, which connects to the issue of biculturalism and deciding which values to follow. Westernization specifically reflected the self-questioning of what it meant to be American.

A more recent study by Inman et al. (2001), identified four broader areas of cultural value conflicts which centred on a) family relations, b) dating, premarital sexual relations, c) marriage and d) sex role expectations. Their findings identified the dissonance second-generation women experience in personal decision-making. The significance of these cultural values has also been identified in other research (Dhruvarajan, 1993; Naidoo, 1985; Wakil, et al., 1981). Adherence and retention of traditional cultural values impact many aspects of an Indian girl's life both in the home and family as well as her interactions outside the home. Therefore it represents a salient

consideration in understanding the experience of second-generation women as they negotiate their bicultural identity.

The findings of the aforementioned studies suggests that East Indian girls are caught between wanting to maintain their East Indian cultural values, but struggling with the expectations of their families and ethnic communities about how these values should be expressed. Simultaneously, they are exposed to western values through peers and school, and must also juggle the competing expectations from these social contexts. This often requires girls to be in a constant state of negotiation with themselves, their position in society, the family and ethnic community.

Interactions with the Host Society

Growing up in two distinct cultural contexts encompassing the home, and school or the society at large can be the basic source of conflict. Ethnic minority children growing up in North American society face the task of retaining their ethnic and cultural identity in the face of competing social and cultural values, pressures to assimilate, and racist attitudes from their peer group (Das Gupta, 1998; Lessinger, 1995; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). Sandhu (1992) discusses some of the tensions that arise for Sikh adolescents in American society. Because of their visible minority status, religious practice and different dress code (i.e., wearing a turban), these children report feeling awkward and socially isolated. At school they are often harassed and teased by other children and asked things like "what are you wearing on your head", "why don't you speak English properly". In addition, they also report facing a level of indifference from school officials to their concerns, thus leaving them feeling socially isolated. The message that gets communicated in the school and the host society is that assimilation is

required in order to fit in and to be accepted. Lessinger (1995) reports similar conclusions regarding racially based harassment, and occasional physical violence directed towards both East Indian boys and girls. Lessinger contends that these children are often rejected by both White and Black peer groups based on racial (i.e. physical features), and cultural practices, thereby, leaving these children feeling excluded and alienated. Studies have connected lower self-esteem, confidence and sense of ethnic pride as a result of these encounters (Drury, 1991; Lessinger, 1995; Sodhi Kalsi, 2003; Phinney, 1990). Ghuman (1997) argues that the outcome of these experiences can either leave adolescents feeling alienated from their home, culture, ethnic community, and school, or contribute to the development of a bicultural identity as a coping strategy.

Ghuman (1991) studied the acculturation attitudes of second-generation British Asian adolescents and found that girls generally scored higher than boys on the acculturation continuum and were more prone to assimilation; and Hindu and Sikh children scored higher than Muslim children. Additional conclusions of this study present key elements that can encourage the development of bicultural identities of East Indian youth. These include teachers being more sympathetic to the cultural values and beliefs of ethnic minority children, and integrating diversity into the curriculum within the classroom. Implementing these strategies in the school system can assist in promoting understanding of cultural diversity and improve the relations between students. Ghuman (1991) also suggests that parents and the ethnic community become more aware of the tensions their children face in the host society, and thereby assist them in negotiating these situations more effectively.

Drury (1991), specifically examined values conflicts and cultural practices with respect to Sikh girls in the UK. She found that in maintaining their ethnic culture, Sikh girls chose to modify and maintain cultural traditions, rather then abandon them completely. Findings revealed that maintenance and retention of ethnic culture centred on religious beliefs, and food restrictions. Conversely, Sikh girls preferred more choice and fewer restrictions for females with regard to clothing norms, domestic responsibilities, dating and marriage partners and social activities.

The learning environment in North American schools also advocates different cultural attitudes such as autonomy, critical thinking, and independence (Ghuman, 1994). These values are contrary to those taught in the majority of East Indian families where interdependence, deference to authority and adherence to tradition are prioritized (Segal, 1991).

The final conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that second-generation individuals face a variety of issues in the host society that contradict the values and attitudes promoted in their families and ethnic culture. Facing these challenges leaves these individuals to find a balance within these two social and cultural spheres, thereby demanding a shift in attitudes and behaviour to accommodate the differences. This adjustment is manifested in acquiring a bicultural identity as a means of coping (Ghuman, 1997).

Multiple Identities

The central issue in negotiating a bicultural identity is possessing multiple identities that are informed by family, social, cultural and environmental factors. The research literature commonly addresses the issue of identities for ethnic minority individuals in the

context of ethnic and racial identity; thereby making these constructs the most salient and defining dimensions of the individual. Emphasizing the salience of a singular identity proves to be problematic in conceptualizing identity issues for visible ethnic minority individuals because they possess a racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. Although individuals from the dominant culture may ascribe racial identity as a primary defining feature of an ethnic minority individual; an individual's identity may be subjectively represented by their ethnic, gender, or religious identity.

Feminist women of colour argue that the feminist movement has emphasized gender as the primary organizing construct from which to understand the experience of ethnic minority women (Collins, 1990; Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Lorde, 1984). These authors contend that the social construction of race, racial politics, oppression, and the racial hierarchies that exist in North American society are more representative of their experience as women of colour. For example, Comas-Diaz and Greene (1994) assert that women of colour (i.e., ethnic minority women) emphasize the need to understand gender as intersecting with other social positions and identities, because issues of ethnicity, race, and class equally inform their definition of self. Hence, it becomes important to understand how the influences of family, culture of origin, societal norms, religion, sexual orientation, and so forth, come together to inform the subjective experience of visible ethnic minority women. Das Gupta (1997, p. 574) extrapolates this concept in her statement that "Being an East Indian woman is not only a question of ethnicity but also of identity".

Postmodern perspectives counter these traditional critiques by understanding and positioning the individual within multiple contexts. This perspective acknowledges that

identity is a construction and is constantly shifting based on the interaction between the environment and the individual. Meaning and definitions of self are fluid concepts that evolve through social interactions and language is seen as the vehicle for transmitting meaning. Considering multiple identities and how individuals tailor their identity to suit different social situations becomes important in understanding how women of colour and ethnic minority women live their biculturalism. Several black feminist and multicultural scholars have highlighted how intersecting identities for women of colour create paradoxical situations for these women. Comas-Diaz and Greene (1994) discuss the contradictions that arise for professional women of colour. They discuss the complex web of expectations these women encounter from their communities and the dominant culture that consequently defines and creates a sense of isolation for these women. The reality these women face involves negotiating issues such as sexism, racism, competing personal and professional demands shifting social norms, and institutional hierarchies that cause great stress and often leave them feeling powerless. For example, professional women of colour describe feeling conflicted about meeting the professional expectations for success (i.e., being assertive, outcome oriented) but also meeting cultural and gendered expectations that require them to be nurturing, home makers and caretakers to their families. Expectations from their ethnic community also places these women in a double bind situation, and thereby highlights the multiple roles and identities they are expected to fulfill. Feminist literature offers numerous examples of how multiple roles and identities for women present conflicting expectations and demands in the context of career choices, family, personal decision making, and professional status (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Walsh & Osipow, 1994).

The concept of hybrid identities or multiple identities has been discussed in a variety of contexts, postcolonial literature, identity and feminist literature. Bhabha's (1990, 1994) concept of hybrid identities challenges our conceptions of understanding individuals who are culturally different. Bhabha's (1990) discourse on cultural change, cultural difference and diversity addresses the concept of hybrid identities and the creation of a third space. He argues that the concept of identity is fluid and located across a range of contradictory social contexts. Furthermore, people exist with multiple identities and not within a singular context such as race, gender or social class. Hence, identity is constructed, and individuals exist in the form of multifaceted, multidimensional, and conflictual identities. He raises the idea of hybridity, which means the creation of a third space through cultural translation and asserts:

> The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "the third space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom...The process of hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation (p. 211).

This concept relates to how an individual creates a unique space (a third space) from pre-existing dichotomous influences, merging them into a new identity, a hybrid identity. Khan, (2002), applies this notion of third space and multiple identities to understanding the experience of Muslim women. Participants' narratives reveal how the intersection of religion, sexuality, race and class merge to present a complex image and

understanding of Muslim women's identity. The dilemmas that arise for these women often centre on contradictions of how they are perceived by society, how they identify and position themselves, and construct their own meaning of being a Muslim woman.

Anzaldua (1987) writes about a similar reality from her own experience, using the concept of "borderlands". She describes herself as a "border woman" who grew up between two cultures, the Mexican and the Anglo. According to Anzaldua, "borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch (preface). Borderlands are physical, psychological, spiritual, and sexual in nature and are found in every society. In her writing she describes her bicultural experience as living on borders and in margins, keeping intact a shifting and multiple identity and integrity. This newly emerging identity is an alien element that represents a new consciousness (new mestiza) that is self-constructed in order to cope with the multiple influences and define the self.

Helie Lee's (1996) narrative offers another example of the challenges of positioning and situating oneself as an ethnic woman. As a second-generation Korean woman she describes struggling with identity questions of how to present herself, how to merge the history of her family and cultural heritage into her own identity; thereby constructing a new, and different ethnic identity. Anita Rau Badami's novel "Tamarind Mem" (1996) offers a similar example of a young East Indian woman who struggles to define herself in relation to her family, mother, and culture.

Dealing with dual cultural environments, and constructing an individual identity essentially requires an individual to adopt selective strategies in negotiating the demands

and requirements within each milieu. In the case of second-generation Indian women, this means choosing which ethnic values to retain and maintain as they make decisions for their future.

Although multicultural and feminist research and theory has informed our understanding of how society, culture, ethnicity, and gender construct identity; we still lack a comprehensive understanding of how these issues collide and influence the subjective experience of second-generation East Indian women. Consequently, the aim of this study is to explore the experience of biculturalism in the lives a diverse group of second-generation East Indian women using qualitative inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Ontology, Epistemology, and Paradigm

An important consideration in conducting qualitative research is attention to paradigms, including assumptions and worldviews, that influence and inform the research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000, Mayan, 2001). These assumptions include addressing the following questions: What is the nature of reality? (ontology), What is the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the research? (epistemology), What is the role of values? (axiology), and What are the strategies and the process that the research will utilize? (methodology).

I have used a constructivist paradigm to inform my research inquiry. This paradigm assumes a social construction of reality, based on an appreciation and consciousness of multiple perspectives and belief systems (Gergen, 1985; Gonzalez, Biever, & Gardner, 1994; Guerin, 1992). Social constructionism is a post positivist paradigm that challenges the traditional notion of an objective external reality/truth that can be uncovered and examined. Instead, it validates multiple perspectives by emphasizing the salience of context. Contexts that encompass a multitude of influences in a person's life and can include variables such as age, religion, gender, race, social class, and ethnicity. Consequently, a constructivist paradigm highlights the notion of subjective meanings assigned by individuals to their personal experience. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) referred to this as an interpretive perspective and suggest that "it always defines shared constructs and meanings as *situated*" (p. 49). Meaning is therefore located in multiple contexts and an individual's reality, and meaning of the world is constructed through his/her interaction with the world and others (Gergen, 1985; Gonzalez, et al.,

1994; Guerin, 1992). According to this point of view, there are many ways of understanding a person's behaviour, interactions and choices when analysis is conducted within the social and cultural context. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) also contended that a constructivist paradigm inherently situates researchers within the research process and inquiry, meaning that they do not remain objective or detached from participants, as is typical in a positivist paradigm. These basic sets of assumptions were adopted for this study examining the participants experience from an emic perspective.

Thus, implementing a constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology and axiology. A relativist ontology assumes that reality is subjective as seen by participants in the study. Although a subjectivist epistemology suggests that a researcher and participant work together to create knowledge through their dialogue and interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000), the implications of a subjective axiology are that all research is value laden and that perspective is inherently present in the very nature and type of research question being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000). Consequently, it becomes necessary for researchers to acknowledge their values within the framework of research inquiry. Finally, the methodological premise of my research will be founded in using inductive logic and interpretation in my data analysis to describe the emergent themes and patterns drawn from participant's experiences.

Justification of Focused Ethnography

The purpose of my study was to explore from within a cultural framework the bicultural experience of a select group of second-generation East Indian women. My primary objective was to understand the salient elements of these women's experiences

from their own perspective. Hence, my research inquiry was located within a qualitative framework and I specifically used a focused ethnographic method.

Werner and Schoepfle (1987) have described ethnography as the partial or complete description of a group, with the root ethno meaning "*folk*" and graphy meaning "*description*". Therefore, ethnography literally means "the description of the folk (people)". Although a variety of ethnographic methods exist, each is inherently informed by the concept of culture. This concept assumes that culture is learned and shared among members of a group. Hence, culture encompasses more than what people say and do but also includes a shared system of meanings (Boyle, 1994; Harris, 1987; Haviland, 1987). Ethnographic inquiry has historically been based in the domain of anthropology but in recent years has been used increasingly in a variety of disciplines such as the social sciences and health sciences.

A central objective in using an ethnographic method is to discover the patterns, features, and strategies within a cultural group. Boyle (1994) has stated "ethnography provides insights about a group of people and offers an opportunity to see and understand their world" (p. 183). Focused ethnography is an adapted form of classic ethnographic inquiry. Morse (1987) and Muecke (1994) have described focused ethnography as being delineated yet context bound. Hence, it focuses on acquiring information about a specific topic or issue and is typically conducted with a subgroup of a larger cultural community (Boyle, 1994; Morse & Richards, 2002; Muecke, 1994). A focused ethnography often relies on a single source of data, such as interviews. In addition, it is also a time limited inquiry (Morse & Richards, 2002), unlike classical ethnography, which is broad based

and relies heavily on extensive field work and participant observation as a primary data collection tool.

A focused ethnographic method is appropriate for this study based on: a) the nature of the research question, which requires using a cultural framework to appropriately understand participants experiences of biculturalism, b) focuses on a specific segment of the East Indian population; second-generation East Indian women, and c) allows for the use of a specific data collection tool (i.e., unstructured interviews) as an effective means of eliciting participants experiences of growing up as visible ethnic minorities in Canada.

Understanding the broad experience of biculturalism in participants' lives encourages using an approach that allows them to share their subjective experience openly. This permits a researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of their personal experiences and the experiential context. Thereby, enabling a researcher to make sense and interpret the meaning individuals give to their experience based on the in-depth, rich, and "thick" descriptions participants may offer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Morrow & Smith, 2000, Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). Furthermore, exploring the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women requires focusing on the interplay of cultural, ethnic, racial and gendered contexts. According to Sue and Sue (1999), biculturalism refers to the idea that minorities in North America inherit two cultural traditions (i.e., values and customs from their ethnic heritage culture, and North American cultures and norms). This definition inherently assumes the influence of "multiple realities and contexts" as defining features in a person's socialization and identity development process. Consequently, framing my inquiry as a

focused ethnography within a constructionist paradigm offers an appropriate conceptual framework to understand the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women.

Sample

Participants

The final sample consisted of sixteen East Indian women between the ages of 20 to 40 who were English speaking and either in the process of completing a university degree or working.

Patton (1990) has suggested using a purposeful sampling strategy in selecting participants because they serve as "information rich cases", meaning participants who have knowledge and experience of the phenomenon in question and are able to reflect, articulate, and offer insight into their experience (p. 169). An additional consideration used in sampling was the idea of redundancy, which advocates that sampling be terminated when no new information is forthcoming from the new data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This concept of redundancy, means that additional data should be collected until emerging categories and themes become redundant and no new coding categories are revealed (Charmaz, 2000; Maxwell, 1996). The need for saturation is used to guide sampling.

Sampling Criteria

I selected the age range of participants to obtain a broad sampling based on the inclusive nature of conducting an ethnographic inquiry. Women between the ages of 20 to 40 represent children of the post-1965 East Indian immigrants to Canada. My decision to limit sampling to adult participants was guided by the concept of purposeful sampling

and participants who had the experience and knowledge of the phenomenon in question were selected. In addition, this decision was based on the fact that research on adult second-generation East Indian women is not adequately addressed in the literature.

The rationale for choosing English-speaking participants was two fold. As the primary researcher, I understand both the Urdu and Punjabi languages; however, my fluency is limited to comprehension. Therefore, to ensure uniformity and consistency of communication styles and to avoid mistranslation of concepts, I conducted the interviews in English. Furthermore, because the target population consists of university-educated second-generation women, it was expected they would have a high English language proficiency. Although English might not have been their first language, I did not directly consider their fluency in other dialects or languages.

I selected the educational and occupational statuses of participants based on common descriptions of first-generation East Indian immigrants in the literature. This ethnic community is typically described as an educated middle class population with an average or above average income (Dhruvarajan, 1993, Sodowsky & Carey, 1987). These criteria were also benchmarks for immigrants gaining entrance into Canada under the changing immigration regulations of the 1960's (Li, 1999, 2003). It was expected that the children of East Indian immigrant families would reflect similar educational and occupational attainment (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Zhou, 1997a). Consequently, I selected a sample representative of this social class for the study.

Sample Demographics

The demographic information sheet (see Appendix A, p. 240-244) included in the information package asked participants to complete information regarding personal

information, immigration history, educational history, occupational history. A summary of this information is presented in Table 1 (p. 39).

City of Residence

At the time of interviewing, two participants resided in Calgary while the remainder resided in the city of Edmonton. Participants had resided in either city for a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 20 years.

Immigration History

All participants were either born in Canada (n=12) or immigrated prior to the age of six (n=4) and therefore the formative years of all participants were spent in Canada. Twelve families emigrated from India, two from East Africa, one from Ireland and one from Pakistan. While the majority of participants were raised in the prairie provinces spanning Manitoba to British Columbia, only one participant came to Alberta as an adult for educational purposes. As a member of a large East Indian community in Ontario, she did not grow up with the same minority identity issues as many of the other participants.

Age

The ages of participants ranged from 20 to 40 years. Three participants were between the age of 20 to 25 years, five between the ages of 26-30, five between the ages of 31 to 35 years, and three between the ages of 36 to 40 years.

Civil Status

The sample included 10 women who were single. Of these 10 women, 6 were living at home, whereas 4 lived alone. Six women were married; 2 were married to East Indian men and 4 were married to non-East Indian men (i.e., White men). Of the married women, 4 had at least 1 child.

Religion

Nine women in the study were raised as Christian (3 identified themselves as East Indian Orthodox Christian), 5 as Hindu, 1 as Muslim, and 1 as Zoroastrian. All women (with the exception of one) continued to practice the faith in which they were raised in their families of origin.

Educational Background

Of the 16 participants, 10 held bachelor degrees within the following disciplines: science, education, and the fine arts. Two participants aged 21 were completing their undergraduate degrees in science and sociology, respectively. Three women held master's degrees in business, education, and science. One participant held a Ph.D. in counselling psychology, and another was in the process of completing her Ph.D. in the same discipline.

Employment Status

Twelve participants in the study were working either part or full time. Two participants were employed part time as they completed their university studies. One was employed as a part time secretary/receptionist, whereas the other worked as a university teaching/research assistant. Participants who were employed full time listed the following careers: 4 worked as educators in either a high school or college setting, 2 were licensed psychologists, 1 was an employment counsellor, 1 as a human resources counsellor, 1 as a social worker, 1 as a disabilities counsellor, 1 as a musician.

Socioeconomic Status

Participants were also asked to identify their socio-economic status according to specific income ranges. Three participants who were employed part time listed their personal socio-economic status as falling between $ 0 and10,000. It is important to note that these women were either married or living at home with their families; therefore, this income did not represent the entire income of their household. Six women classified themselves in the range of $30,000 and $40,000; six others fell between the range of $40,000 and $50,000, and one participant categorized herself as earning above $50,000.

Table1
Demographic Summary

Category	Number
Age (years)	
20-25	3
26-30	5
31-35	5
36-40	3
Civil Status	
Single	10
Living at home	6
Living alone	4
Married	6
White men	4
East Indian men	2
Children	4
Education	
Completed Bachelor degree	10
Enrolled in Bachelor degree	1
Completed Masters degree	3
Completed Ph.D.	1
Enrolled in Ph.D. program	1
Religious Background	
Christian	9
Hindu	5
Muslim	1
Zoroastrian	1
Occupations	
Educator (high school/ college)	4
Musician	1
Psychologists	2
Social Worker	1
Employment Counsellor	1
Human Resources counsellor	1
Receptionist	1
University TA/RA	1
Socio-economic Status	
$0 and $10,000	3
$20,000 and $30,000	0
$30,000 and $40,000	6
$40,000 and $50,000	6
$50,000 plus	1

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a variety of professional, academic, social, and community agencies and through professional networking (internship supervisor, professional colleagues, and social acquaintances) in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. I made initial contacts with agencies through e-mail or in vivo contact. Upon gaining ethics approval from the University of Calgary (see Appendix D), I distributed research flyers through Indian student associations on campus and two academic List Serves.

In Edmonton, I posted flyers at the University of Alberta and local East Indian community centres. I also placed research advertisements in community newspapers and local magazines. Although each of these advertising strategies produced moderate results, I recruited the majority of participants through a snowball or nominated technique (i.e., referral from participants in the study). Participants who responded to the advertisements or who were referred for the study were initially contacted by phone to confirm their interest in participating and to assess their suitability according to selection criteria. Each of these participants expressed an interest in the project and eagerly agreed to participate.

Data Collection

During the initial phone contact, I gave participants a brief summary of the research project and objectives and addressed any general questions. I offered participants interview appointments at their convenience and the majority indicated a preference to be interviewed in their homes; with the exception of three women, who preferred being interviewed on campus given their course schedules. I interviewed these women in individual interview rooms at the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology at the University of Alberta. This interview location was available to all

participants, however it seemed most convenient for participants who were on the university campus on a regular basis. Interviews conducted in participants homes typically occurred in a private room in the house (i.e., living room, dining room area, or in a finished basement).

Prior to beginning the interview, I asked participants to complete a demographic information sheet (see Appendix A, p. 240) and two copies of a consent form (see Appendix B, p. 245). The first copy of the consent form was kept in each participants' file, whereas the second copy was given to participants for their personal records. If participants had any questions about the project after completing the consent and demographic information sheets, they were addressed prior to beginning the interview.

Interviewing

As the sole researcher I interviewed all participants in the study. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio taped with the expressed and voluntary consent of the participant. The first interview was an open-ended/unstructured interview and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes (see List 1, p. 54). Participants were asked to respond to the following question: "Tell me what is it like for you to grow up in your family and in Canadian society. Minimal prompts (i.e., tell me more....) were used to encourage participant stories. Using an open-ended question in the first interview forms a fundamental component of ethnographic interviewing (Spradley, 1979; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). Spradley refers to it as a "grand tour question", whereas Werner and Schoepfle use the term "exploratory question". A fundamental assumption of qualitative interviewing is that a participants' perspective is meaningful and a valid source of knowledge (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Unstructured interviewing offers an

effective way of beginning this exploration, as it enables the researcher to gain a broad, or macroscopic view of the participants lives which often highlights significant elements of their experience (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). Interviews were conducted over a period of 9 months (June 2002 to March 2003).

After completing the first interview, I started keeping personal notes about the process, content, and setting of the interview. These memos served as an additional data collection strategy (Maxwell, 1996; Morse & Field, 1995). Throughout the process of conducting this inquiry, I also maintained a research diary to track my personal process, evolution and synthesis of ideas.

Audiotapes of each interview were transcribed by a professional transcriber and were numerically coded prior to being submitted for transcription. The numerical coding of each tape consisted of a three-digit number that reflected the interview number (i.e., first or second interview) and an identifying number assigned to each participant (i.e., 01, 02). This coding ensured confidentiality and the anonymity of each participant. As the sole researcher, I handled and maintained personal and confidential information regarding participants. Transcripts were reviewed for accuracy of transcription and each transcription was verified prior to beginning data analysis. From a total of 20 interviews, 4 interviews were eliminated because of poor sound quality or because they resulted in un-useable data. Hence, sixteen interviews constituted the final data set for analysis. Morse (1994) has suggested that at the beginning of data collection, the first several interviews can also be used to assist the investigator in developing a comfort level with the interview technique and setting (p. 229). Once this is accomplished, more productive data collection can begin. Following Morse's recommendation, I used 4 of the initial

interviews to develop (a) effective interview skills, (b) a level of comfort in conducting interviews in participants homes and using the audio-taping equipment adeptly, and (c) refine interview questions.

Participants were gracious and hospitable in receiving me in their homes and gave freely of their time and introduced me to other family members. This suggested that they were comfortable in being interviewed.

Data Analysis

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) described data analysis in ethnographic research as an interactive process that requires the researcher to engage in a process of reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis phase of research. This process is recursive and iterative, meaning that it begins in early stages of data collection and continues throughout analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Although data analysis is an ongoing process, it requires researchers to engage in many levels of cognitive analysis. A central task in analyzing qualitative data is generating categories and examining emerging patterns from the data that assist in making sense of the information participants have offered. The development of categories and themes provide a description and explanation of cases, but it is also important to consider and identify potential relationships in the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Therefore, using the central premise of generating categories, themes, and the relationships in the data, a latent content analysis was used to analyse text data. This first involved identifying recurring patterns and concepts in the data (words, phrases, expressions).

The process of data analysis began with the review of the first interview transcript and continued throughout the project. The general analytic procedures of content analysis was used to draw out general patterns and themes from the data (Mayan, 2001; Morse & Richards, 2002).

Stage 1: Topic Coding

The first phase of analysis involved thoroughly reading transcripts and storing them in as individual files in the computer. Working with a hard copy of the transcript, I assigned labels to sections of the text to identify and summarize the content and topic of each section. I tagged data with labels (Morse & Richards, 2002), highlighted segments of the text with neon markers, and wrote labels in the right hand margins. Each transcript was labelled in this manner, resulting in a broad and general list of labels outlining salient elements within each transcript and across all transcripts. This list consisted of approximately 20 labels, including the role of parents, the experiences of racism/discrimination; personal process; identity issues; childhood, adolescence, and adult experiences; personal challenges; coping strategies; family/upbringing; social networks; support systems; mentors/role models; ethnic identity issues; creating a personal balance; disconnection and connection to their ethnic community; cultural values; cultural tensions; and religion. The list of labels became more comprehensive as I worked with each successive transcript. This process of coding allowed me to become familiar with the text data and with each participants' unique experience of growing as an East Indian girl in her family and in Canadian society. This process also allowed me to begin asking more analytic questions of the data, for example "What are the significant influences in these women's lives? ", and "What are commonalities in their stories?".

Stage 2: Sorting and Categorization

The second step of analysis involved shifting focus from individual participant's experiences to a broader focus. I reviewed all the transcripts and began developing broad categories to reflect the common elements of participants' experiences. This process required working alternatively with hard copies of transcripts and creating individual category files on the computer. Using the summarized lists from topic coding assisted me in identifying links between topics and thereby initiated the process of developing general categories. As categories were defined and developed, text data were cut and pasted and added to separate category files. Some text segments included multiple themes and were therefore included in multiple categories. Within each category file, the text segment was identified by a title header that included the transcript, interview and line numbers. This made all text segments easily retrievable and identifiable as to original data source and transcript.

As categories were developed and data were entered under each category, a process of memoing was also undertaken. Memoing involved inserting ideas, theoretical comments, annotations, links to existing concepts, and reflections about each segment of text and category into the text. All memos were identifiable from the original text data because they were bracketed and written using a different font style from the original text data. The review function in Microsoft Word was also used to highlight text in different colours and to insert comments and notes, thus making memos both visible and recognizable in each file. In this stage, I focused on beginning to move the analytic process of coding to a more abstract and conceptual level. Eight broad categories emerged from this analysis and included (a) *fitting in (where do I belong?),* (b) *families*

and upbringing, (c) *cultural clashes*, (d) *creating own fit (balancing East Indian-ness and Canadian-ness)*, (e) *challenges*, (f) *evolution and shift with age*, (g) *gems*, and (h) *miscellaneous information*. The last two categories titled *gems* and *miscellaneous* information did not represent formal categories representative of the data, but rather, were developed to catalogue additional text data. The *gems* file included text segments that highlighted poignant examples of participant experiences, whereas the *miscellaneous* file title is self-explanatory. Consequently, only six categories were developed from the initial data set. Several subcategories were also identified from this preliminary analysis.

The category *fitting in* represented the self-questioning that participants experienced about where and how they fit-into Canadian society and within their own communities. *Families and upbringing* represented the influence that family and their ethnic community had on their identification with cultural values. It also included elements of religious affiliation, the transmission of values, and family and immigration history. *Cultural clashes* described the tensions participants experienced within different contexts and these included experiences of racism, discrimination and cultural values conflicts with their families. The category of *challenges* represented personal challenges participants experienced in their lives as they negotiated and navigated various personal, academic and professional circumstances. These included a sense of connection and disconnection from their families or communities, and tensions in social relationships. The category of *creating one's own fit/balance* fundamentally represented how participants attempted to retain their East Indian-ness and simultaneously maintain their Canadian-ness. This included elements of cultural values, support systems, marriage and raising children, and a shifting identity with age. The Category titled *evolution with age*

represented a developmental shift in ethnic identity and level of self acceptance that occurred for many women as they moved through their 20s into their 30s and 40s. This shift reflected a change in how they perceived themselves and situated themselves in their ethnic, racial, and gender identities.

Table 2
Preliminary Categories

Category Label	Factors & Influences
Fitting in	• Sense of isolation • Race/Physical features • Assumptions/Stereotypes • Strategies for fitting in
Families/Upbringing	• Culturally traditional practices • Religion • Connection and Disconnection • Gendered Expectations
Cultural Clashes	• Racism/Discrimination • Assumptions/Stereotypes (mainstream + Indian community) • Tension within family
Challenges	• Internal struggle with racial, ethnic and cultural differences
Creating Own Fit	• Selecting personal values • Marriage and children • Support systems • Personal Definition of being Indian
Evolution with Age	• Shift in ethnic identity, cultural values with age • Negotiate place in ethnic community differently • Not struggling to fit in

Stage 3: Analytic Coding

Once preliminary categories were developed, the next step of analysis involved identifying salient categories. This resulted in the creation of four categories which included *(a) Fitting in, (b) Creating own fit, (c) Families and Upbringing, (d) Cultural Clashes.* Therefore, the two categories of *challenges* and *evolution with age* were absorbed into these 4 overarching themes. Collapsing categories also required me to ask more detailed questions and to seek new ideas from the data. This was accomplished by reviewing transcripts and data summaries and by adding new memos. Diagramming categories and relationships between categories also facilitated the analytic process.

Concurrently, follow-up interviews were arranged with 6 participants to obtain more complete information about emerging categories and themes. Follow-up interviews were again conducted in participant's homes and lasted approximately 60 to90 minutes. Although these interviews remained largely unstructured, they were guided by prompts and presented with respect to topic areas (see List 1, p. 54 interview prompts). Follow-up interviews were not restricted or limited by a semi structured interview format, each interview was adapted slightly to suit the participant, and the introduction of topics was not strictly ordered.

I analyzed follow-up interviews using a latent content analysis procedure (as outlined previously). In these second interviews, participants often elaborated on their experiences and shared more detailed stories, thoughts, and ideas about the concepts of fitting in and not fitting in, the significance of retaining their East Indian cultural values, heritage, and practices; and the challenges they experienced in adapting their cultural values and ethnic identity. Although no new categories emerged directly from these

interviews, I developed a deeper understanding of their personal process, external challenges, and coping skills and strategies. Analysis of this interview data allowed the central categories of *fitting in and not fitting in* and r*etaining one's East Indian-ness* to be developed more comprehensively. Follow-up interviews offered a means of verifying information from the initial data set and contributed to producing richer descriptions of participants' experiences of biculturalism.

Negative Cases

Mayan, (2001) has described negative cases as "data that is different from what the majority of the sample is saying" (p. 23). When a negative cases emerges, it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to check for similar cases. If similar cases are found then new categories may emerge from the data, however, if no similar cases are found the data is considered to be an anomaly (p. 23). Although I remained attentive to the possibility of negative cases throughout the data collection process, none where found. Only one participant's interview produced very little useable data. The dynamic of the interview process did not lend to an effective interview. Consequently, the process and content of the interview was labelled as anomalous and was not used in the final analysis.

Stage 4: Integrating Categories to Themes

A final step of analysis included integrating categories and finding themes. The objective of this level of analysis was to move to a high order of analysis and to reveal the "bigger picture" in the data, the common themes running through the data and to move the analysis forward conceptually. Although each stage of the analysis process has been presented in a linear form; it is important to note that data analysis was a circular process that moved between different levels of analysis simultaneously. It can be best

described as an iterative cyclical process that moved between personal reflection, dialogue with colleagues, and reference to formal sources of knowledge.

The final themes that comprehensively addressed salient elements of participants experiences included: 1) *How they are expected and taught to be East Indian,* 2) *How they are expected to be Canadian,* 3) *What happens when cultures clash,* 4) *How they retain their East Indian-ness,* 5) *How they fit-in and don't fit-in*, and 6) *How they create a balance in their lives and resolve cultural value conflicts.*

Table 3
Final Categories

Category	**Factors & Influences**
How they are taught to be Indian	• Parental role models • Mothers as role models • Extended family • Connection to community • Cultural norms for girls
How they are taught to be Canadian	• Social activities • Family Structure • Living alone
Retaining their East Indian-ness (ethnic identity)	• Self-identification • Tradition/history • Marriage & children • Fear of cultural dilution • Personal definition of being Indian • Merging of cultural values in their lives
How they fit in and do not fit in	• Awareness of Race • Dilemmas of race (mainstream society and community)
What happens when cultures clash	• Negative stereotypes • Clashes within ethnic community • Being a "real" Canadian
Creating a Balance	• Creating congruence in cultural values

Ensuring Methodological Rigor

Within the context of ethnographic research, Muecke (1994) offers some general evaluation criteria which include (a) demystifying the experience of a group of people being studied and offering a coherent representation of their experience to the reader, (b) presenting an honest and considerate depiction of participants and their experience, (c) acknowledging the standpoint and relationship of the researcher within the research context, (d) respecting the integrity and anonymity of participants, and (e) presenting a rich analytic description of data and cultural phenomenon under investigation. These criteria are not distinctive steps, but rather, overlapping principles. I met the criteria of presenting an honest depiction of my participants experience by audio taping my interviews, having them transcribed verbatim, and working intensively with the data throughout the analysis process. Acknowledging my standpoint and relationship within the research context was achieved by keeping a journal and documenting steps of the ongoing research process. My data collection procedures outline how confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained. Finally, creating a comprehensive and rich description of participants' experiences was achieved through the adequacy of data (saturation), the recursive, analytic and interpretative data analysis process and the crafting of the final write-up of my research. Mayan (2001) offers additional considerations in ensuring that research is rigorous: internal and external validity. Assessing internal validity in qualitative inquiry requires continuously monitoring that one's conclusions and description of events are grounded in the data (i.e., accurately represented by the data). Within the context of the current study, the iterative process of data analysis, coupled with conducting in-depth interviews, adherence to the principles of

obtaining quality data (adequacy) and purposive sampling lends to enhancing the internal validity of the study.

The concept of external validity in qualitative research centres on the notion of fit (i.e., degree of transferability) which refers to a reader's ability to transfer the information from a project to other situations, contexts, or groups. To assist a reader of a study in generalizing findings, a researcher needs to provide in-depth and rich descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. Mayan (2001) adds that the degree of fit between the transferring context (research setting) and the receiving context determines the degree of transferability (p. 26).

Mayan (2001) contends that the most effective way of ensuring rigor is by remaining conscientious and attentive to implementing verification strategies throughout the research project. These strategies include "investigator's responsiveness, methodological coherence, sampling, data analysis and thinking theoretically" (p. 26).

Investigator responsiveness refers to the researcher maintaining a stance of critical analysis and intellectual flexibility throughout the research process. This requires continually challenging one's initial assumptions and conclusions about the data. Remaining open and flexible as one proceeds through all stages of the research inquiry is an essential element of ensuring rigor. Throughout this research process, this criterion was met through working with the data in an interactive and iterative fashion, and by seeking critical feedback and dialogue with colleagues.

Methodological congruence refers to using appropriate methods of inquiry, data collection and analysis to examine the phenomenon and answer the research question. Maintaining flexibility throughout the research process, adjusting interview techniques,

methods of analysis, conceptualization and seeking consultation were all steps used to ensure methodological coherence and congruence.

Ensuring rigor through sampling was met through sampling adequacy and saturation of categories. According to Morse (1994), adequacy of data refers to the amount of data collected (not a sample size), and this criterion is met when saturation occurs. Appropriateness is achieved through strategies of purposeful sampling, and saturation is dependent upon obtaining both an appropriate and adequate sample.

Finally, the ongoing, interactive and iterative process of data analysis adds another element of rigor to the current inquiry through attention to establishing internal and external validity. This also lends support to working creatively and inductively with the data and developing new ideas and perspectives. Additional steps to ensuring rigor included prolonged engagement with the data, moving back and forth in the analysis and the conceptualization of emerging categories, and maintaining a research journal.

List 1

Interview Prompts

First Interview: (Unstructured Interview 60-90 minutes)

- *Tell me what it is like for you as an East Indian woman to grow up in your family and in Canadian society?*

Second Interview: (60-90 minutes)

Introduction: Several women have talked about their experiences of finding a middle ground between their East Indian and Canadian cultural values and how that comes together in their life. I would like to understand this experience more completely and would like to know more about what you think of (themes of fitting in/not fitting in, retaining one's East Indian-ness, influence of families and cultural upbringing).

- *Tell me what you think of this idea of fitting in?*
- *Tell me about your experience of fitting in/not fitting in?*
- *Tell me what happens when you don't fit in (do fit in)*
- *Tell me what you do to cope with these situations?*

I proceeded to explore the other themes in a similar manner.

- *Tell me how your East Indian and Canadian cultural values come together?*
- *Tell me when this comes together easily (not so easily)?*
- *What helps these situations?*

I concluded interviews by asking participants,

What advice they would offer another East Indian woman who was dealing with these issues (fitting in/not fitting in and creating a balance in her own life)? What would you recommend she do?

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

GROWING UP IN CANADA

The following narrative represents a synthesized account of participant's experiences of growing up in Canada. The narrative is sequenced according to life phases of childhood, adolescent, and adulthood experiences, and highlights significant issues within these life stages. This framework will offer a context from which to present and discuss the salient dimensions and themes that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Childhood

Migration

The majority of participants' families emigrated directly from India beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the 1970s. However, two families had emigrated from East Africa, one family from Pakistan and another from Ireland (see Table 1, p. 39). Of the two East African families, one family had been away from India for three generations whereas the second had left India recently. All the women in this study were born in Canada or immigrated with their families prior to age six; thus, their formative years were spent growing up in Canadian society. Although all of the women are currently living in the province of Alberta, many of them grew up in smaller cities, town, and rural communities across the western provinces spanning Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Parental Background

Participants generally described their parents as professionals, such as doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses or entrepreneurs. Although a formal education was common for both parents, several participants described their mothers as not working outside the

home during their childhood. Prior to immigrating, their families also came from middle class backgrounds in their countries of origin and were able to maintain or improve their socio-economic status upon immigrating to Canada. As young children many of the participants grew up within a middle or upper-middle class, social and socio-economic environment. Only one participant described her family as being of a lower socio-economic status upon immigration as they came to Canada as refugees during a period of civil unrest in Africa in the mid 1970's. The professional status of their parents allowed these girls to enjoy a middle class lifestyle as children, living in safe suburban neighbourhoods.

Childhood Communities

In response to the open-ended question in the first interview, "Tell me what it is like for you to grow up in your family and in Canadian society", participants often started talking about their life experiences beginning in childhood. They began by identifying the community in which they grew up. For the most part, their childhood communities had limited ethnic and racial diversity in the population, and therefore their families were often the only ethnic minority family in town or one family among a few others. The presence of a relatively small number of visible-minority individuals contributed to these women's sense of being different from mainstream society. This also created a sense of isolation and disconnection from their ethnic identity and heritage as well from their ethnic community.

> But <pause> we grew up mostly in M.H. and it was very white, and very German which was my dad's background. And there was…what do you call it…well…discrimination…you know. Yeah I guess, because there weren't very many non-white people in M.H. And before that we actually lived in N.S. which is just outside of here – there's like 200 people in this mostly rural community. And I know for my mother it was *a very harsh* change from being what she thought was being middle, upper class – that kind of thing – to being perceived as not as good because she was not white. And I don't know, if she passed that onto us but I really associated myself with German – and people would ask me "Oh, I'm German" although you know, I look at it and "go yeah, right, what was I thinking?" [Participants emphasis in italics].

Social Activities and Integration

As they grew up feeling different because they were one of the few ethnic minority families in their childhood communities, they nonetheless participated in numerous social and cultural activities that socialized them to both Canadian and East Indian cultures. Their Canadian activities included participating in school sports teams, social and academic committees, socializing with Canadian friends, eating North American food, and dressing in North American fashions. Simultaneously, their East Indian activities included attending East Indian dance and language classes, cultural and religious activities, and festivals. In this regard they had the opportunity to socialize to varying degrees within the East Indian community through activities connected to their

churches, temples, and youth groups. As they engaged in these everyday activities they described seeing themselves as typical Canadian children.

> Well we were involved in almost everything as far as I could think of. Like when we were young, we would go to Hindi Classes, <inaudible> and our parents were involved in the Hindu society where you go <inaudible> dances and music and we were always kind of around that. They were involved in Counsel of India Society and involved in India day celebration and stuff, so things like that. It's just neat being involved in all that <inaudible>. And you have something besides just what was at school. And then in school, when you're younger you don't really see your school friends outside of school, it's more like they're there to hang out with you while you're at school. But it wasn't like when we went home that we just sat at home and watched TV…we had a whole community and you really were heavily involved in and stuff.

In addition, their families also facilitated their integration into Canadian society by celebrating holidays and events from both Canadian and East Indian cultural traditions. This further contributed to participant's sense of being "typically Canadian" in some ways.

> And I think it was hard for my parents too to raise us in a Canadian culture. I remember us having a Christmas tree growing up when we were younger having a Christmas tree but still felt like celebrating Divali a month before. So my parents

> tried really hard to encourage both cultures but this is who we were – we were Hindu, this is what we believed in, this is the language we speak, and these are the things that happen in our culture and our values. So we grew up with those really strong…I think really strong East Indian culture and East Indian values in our home because we always had someone there who influenced it. Even my parents have been away from India for over 30 years, I think part of it is the fact that we have had consistent family come from India and my parents have….they've kind of kept that East Indian culture. I think if they didn't, if it was just the four of us, they might have opened up a little bit more by the time when we were in high school because they wouldn't have had those influences of brothers and sisters and parents of them – which they did.

Although participants described themselves as "typical Canadian" children, they nonetheless did recognize that there were differences between themselves and their peers, particularly with respect to a different set of cultural norms and traditions within their families and communities. These norms were reflected in different expectations and demands, rules of conduct and behaviour, food, clothes, and religious practices. As young East Indian girls (preadolescent), their families encouraged their integration into Canadian society by permitting English to be spoken at home and allowing them to dress in North American clothes and socialize with their peers through different social, academic and sports activities. Simultaneously, within their homes and communities they learned to live with a second set of cultural rules that highlighted traditional East Indian cultural values and dictated their interactions and behaviour in their families and their

ethnic community. For example, expectations of girls included helping their mothers in the home, staying home to entertain company or other family members, demonstrating modesty and decorum in their behaviour, and showing respect for elders.

> The role of an East Indian woman was very predominant too in terms of when somebody comes over, you get up and get them water and when somebody....you know, you do the cooking and all of that stuff – is very traditional East Indian. So when I was going to school, it was really hard because my friends didn't understand that. My friends didn't understand why I had to go home and help my mom with stuff, and my friends didn't understand why I was doing dishes after supper every single night, why wouldn't your brother take a turn? Because we don't do that in the East Indian culture... <laughing>. So we grew up....I grew up with a lot of that. And I wouldn't say my parents were strict, I think my parents just really enforced the East Indian culture on us.

For the majority of these girls their families offered the primary examples of what it meant to be East Indian, and communicated the message that being East Indian was distinct from being Canadian. Their childhood experiences therefore represented two distinct cultural and social spheres. Outside of their families, they learned how to be Canadian and within their families, they learned how to be East Indian. As young children (preadolescence) this distinction did not appear to create immediate tensions or conflicts within their home or family life. Nonetheless, this dichotomized life could be seen as carrying mixed and conflicting messages because it required these young girls to

learn the rules of appropriate behaviour in both communities and to switch effortlessly and skilfully between the two worlds depending on the milieu.

> My mom is so…she raised us to assimilate well into any environment that we were put into basically. Like when we're in Canada and we are interacting with other Canadians – so White or whatever, I assimilate well. I talk about "we" because I've got two sisters, and I think when we're in our East Indian community, we assimilate very well and I remember when we went to India, I think I was in my second year of university, a lot of our cousins would tell us that you know a lot of people come from America and visit us and they don't….you can tell right away that they're from somewhere else. But for us, we assimilate so easily that a lot of people couldn't even tell that we were from Canada or America as they call the whole Northern Hemisphere! So I found that a very interesting comment because I felt very at ease in that environment. I feel very at ease in that Canadian environment as well.

It is important to note that not every girl was able to move fluidly and easily between her two cultural milieus. It appeared that the stricter the adherence to cultural practices in their home, the more difficult and challenging became their bicultural integration. It is interesting to note that cultural practices were often connected to a religious affiliation and social community particularly for Muslim and Hindu girls. The following participant was a Pakistani Christian and grew up socializing primarily within a Muslim social community. Her family's adherence and connection to East Indian cultural

practices appeared to be informed mainly by the values and behaviour connected to the Muslim religion and common practices of the Muslim community in which they socialized.

> Like we grew up with these guys, my father – even though we were Christian – culturally was very strict and was dominant in our family and whatever he said went. And it was a very strict, strict environment. I wasn't allowed to hang out after school in junior high or high school, I had to come straight home. Very rare…actually, I don't remember ever going to somebody's birthday party or something like that because my parents didn't want us too much to socialize with people outside of our culture because they were afraid that we would go crazy or whatever. And that was from a very early age – like 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 years old. I remember even, again culturally in our culture, women cover their bodies, so you don't wear dresses or shorts and things like that. Now Christian's I've seen….the Pakistani- Christians that we knew of, although they were far removed from us, did get to do those kinds of things. But I remember, I'd think when I was 7 years old, my mom and my dad told me that I wouldn't wear dresses any more because I had outgrown them and that's just the way it was. I never thought anything different of it because that's how all the other girls also were kind of living – all of the other Muslim girls. So I never questioned that. I was very quiet in school, I worked hard in school and I never rebelled, I never questioned. I mean obviously at that time I was pretty young, but it never occurred to me that it could be any other way.

Awareness and Dilemmas of Race

As children these girls become cognizant of their visible racial status from an early age. In most instances recognizing their visibility was a surprise and shock. For one woman, this realization came at a very young age (4 years old), whereas for many others, it emerged at around the age of 7 years. Realizing that they were brown and not white was not a spontaneous realization, but rather, an awareness that occurred through other people's comments.

These remarks ran the gamut of innocent comments made by a parent to harsher racist comments made by others. For example, one young girl recounted how her father's comments made her realize she was different from her teammates on the soccer team. He noted that he could spot her easily because she was the only pair of brown legs on the playing field.

> So a lot of it was just a big hodgepodge of teasing. I just figured that was part of childhood. I didn't...and it hit me I think I remember being around 10 or 11 or so and I was playing soccer and it was raining one day really really bad and my dad was waiting for me in the car to pick me up and so when I finally went to go get him, I opened the car door and I said, "how did you know it was me? How did you know it was me?" And he says, "Because you're the only brown legs out there!" He made a comment that sort of for him was just a silly little way of identifying which person in the orange shirt I was. But it never occurred to me and I remember going home and looking – we get a soccer team picture every year – and I remember looking at it going oh my God! I am....like that's really

weird, I never really identified myself as being a different colour until that comment.

It is interesting to note the underlying paradox suggested by the comments of these young women. On the one hand, they appeared to lack an awareness of their racial status, but simultaneously were able to identify and acknowledge cultural differences in expectations and demands between themselves and their Canadian peers. The issue of visibility (racial difference) also needs to be considered with respect to the overt instances of racism and discrimination they also experienced throughout their childhood. These comments included teasing, or name-calling ("nigger" or "paki") by peers or individuals from the dominant majority.

I was very oblivious and I'm sure a lot of children are to their colour and their place, and I knew I was different but I also knew…I didn't know why. I didn't know, I didn't know it had anything to do with my colour or anything. I remember being teased and being called names and being asked things like "Are you only allowed to drink chocolate milk?" or silly things like that.

I think there was some indirect racism…there was some direct, but that was from people I didn't know - like people who would drive by in cars and shout things…. I can only remember that happening a couple of times. I think I was called Paki, and I think I got called nigger once but I'm not sure. So I can't really quite remember exactly what I was called, that's just kind of what I think I was called.

One participant described how her brother also came to acknowledge his racial status in light of comments from outsiders; therefore, it was not only these girls that lacked a consciousness about racial differences at a young age.

> Yeah. And they.... well one of them – my youngest brother, he is the darkest out of all of us and he didn't figure out that he was brown. He came home one day and someone had called him "You're Brown" or whatever and he goes "I'm white!" It was odd! I don't know...I don't know.

In addition, they were not the sole targets of racist remarks and comments - other family members were also targeted even though those members shared racial status of the majority population. The following participant described how her German father was also called "paki" by his students. It appears that this type of name-calling was not only used to identify a racial difference (i.e., being East Indian) but also served as a general insult or put-down.

> But yeah, their marriage was not very good. Well they had a lot of stress to deal with, I mean that alone – if your spouse isn't accepted. Although it's funny now, my dad is German but his family...there were 17 kids and so they've got the range from blonde all the way...he's got black hair and he tans very easily. So all the time...he was a principal at the junior high – if they were mad at him they'd go "You Paki" which just slays him because that was their big insult.

Hence, the racial slurs or negative comments these girls experienced further supported their understanding that being brown was bad and situated them on the margin of mainstream society.

Reactions to Awareness of Racial Differences

For many of these girls, their cultural differences, religious practices, food preferences, and cultural activities did not represent a source of tension or concern for them as individuals. It was only when confronted by their racial difference that their other cultural differences took on new meaning and significance. Most often, the racist comments and name-calling were instances that created a strong sense of being an outcast and feelings of being different or weird. For some individuals, these feelings were coupled with feeling ashamed and embarrassed about being East Indian, and this, in turn, translated into a desire to not be identifiable as an East Indian person – given that being ethnic carried with it a negative stereotype and perception from society. One participant shared an example of how she tried to distance herself from her East Indian heritage and identity.

> Yeah, and down there they didn't know the difference between Paki and East Indian, so you got Paki a lot. You know, that kind of stuff. I really didn't want to be East Indian. I didn't want to be Brown; I wanted to be White although summer was good because you got tanned. <laughing> But it just didn't....I really didn't want to be...I totally shut that off. I didn't care where my mother was born, didn't want to know anything, nothing.

Another participant shared how these experiences had left her with a lack of confidence as a child and also questioning what it must feel like to be part of the racial majority.

> So I think that makes it hard because you don't, what you end up identifying with is not being East Indian. You kind of identify with the majority, which at that time would have been Whites and there was a small time where I did, I wondered all the time what it was like to be White. Where people wouldn't look at you and people wouldn't say that...because your hair was long you're a witch, or people would stop saying "why are your lips so dark?" Like different things like that and you're like why are they asking these questions? So you don't really.... and growing up in [province], no, I think that was part of probably one of my issues. Everyone wonders why I'm so quiet for the longest time or what happened, but when I think when you're faced with non-acceptance, these people questioning who you are or why you look a certain why, why would you be a confident individual? Why would you sort of step up to the plate and take a hit? It's not always asked out of curiosity, it's asked out of well I don't understand why you look like that and why are you so different.

Other participants expressed a similar self-questioning as being envious of their play mates and school peers whom they described as blonde, blued eyed and fair skinned.

> Growing up in my family…I grew up in a small town, so there weren't a lot of….it wasn't very multicultural, there wasn't a lot of other….there were some other East Indian families but not a lot at the time I was growing up, but definitely felt….I definitely felt that I was a minority and a visible minority and a certain amount of….I don't know if I would say embarrassment about it, that might be too strong. But it's not really too strong, I think as a child I didn't want to be different. I remember always thinking that the little blonde haired girls in my class were so lucky, they had such beautiful hair and I wanted that. Of course I'd never have that! <laughing> And I think I felt different and I think I felt I was treated differently – to an extent because of that – because I was East Indian.

Absence of Positive Media Images

Their racial minority status further compounded their sense of isolation and maginalization from mainstream society. In many instances skin colour and complexion became a defining aspect of their childhood years. In addition, while growing up they encountered very few images on television or through the media that offered positive images of ethnic minorities, let alone East Indians. Popular culture portrayed images of beauty that represented a North American ideal of femininity and beauty. These images presented an unattainable ideal for these girls particularly with respect to physical characteristics (blonde, blued eyed, tall, and fair skinned). Furthermore, the portrayal of East Indians on television or in magazines offered images of very traditional and remote communities and villages, where individuals were uneducated, unskilled and of low socio-economic status. Therefore, these images of India and East Indians also did not

offer a point of reference or connection for them, as they did not live this way nor did their families come from this lifestyle and background. There appeared to be no place (aside from their individual families or community) where they could identify or connect to being East Indian and see positive images of their ethnicity. This further compounded rather than counteracted their sense of being different, weird, or strange. The dilemma or question that surfaced as a result of these experiences became questioning, "Who am I"? and "Where do I belong"?

While this type of self-questioning was common to all participants' experiences it was particularly evident in the stories of women 30 years and older, as they described growing up in an era in which the media did not reflect diversity in the way it does today. Therefore, with few other ethnic minorities in their communities to identify with, few role models or mentors, and no positive images of East Indian women, women in this cohort struggled more than their younger counterparts in developing a strong sense of their ethnic identity as young women.

The younger women (age 20 years) described similar experiences but also remarked that they had grown up in a society and a world that was learning to appreciate diversity more than it did a mere 10 years ago. Many of them described today's society as perceiving "ethnic as being cool and trendy" and that ethnic diversity was apparent in contemporary fashion, food, décor, movies, actors, and media personalities.

> And I think now the way things are, it's really cool to be different. That's the trend, its cool to have a different name and different kind of clothes and things like that. It's what is considered the "in thing" almost to be different. Like kids

and stuff, I remember when I was in elementary all the kids had....there were five Jennifers and six Christines - it was really typical, regular, Canadian type names and now you go to classrooms and even kids who are regular Canadian kids, they've got.....like there's this one kid who instead of Kevin is Kevon and then you've got really different sounding names. I think people now a days are more like it's neat to be different – not to be so typical. So I think now especially, it's so much easier when you're younger to be proud of your culture because it's...having that little bit of difference is <inaudible> or even looks and stuff, maybe more exotic even with models you're not sure what race they are or what ethnic background. Well before everyone use to think blonde hair and fair skin and blue eyes and now it's really different because you see a lot of coloured people. So it's kind of neat that you can <inaudible> than it was when I was younger. I find that kind of useful because it's cool and I'm different, so that's good.

Definitely. And in a lot of ways not just in terms of the clothes or whatever but even in the music you see a lot of...R&B, Hip-Hop songs, very typical East Indian songs, and they are mainstream songs – they put East Indian beats in because its "in". You see it in the food and people are eating at East Indian restaurants so it is more mainstream now and people are experiencing it more. So you can be more open and free about your culture – so its cool and I think things are changing. Yeah, for sure, from what I can see. Like I was a lot younger but

still. Like just even in movies you see them being more popular now. After about ten years or so there has been a big change.

Younger participants also noted that their older siblings had a harder time fitting in then they did and that there were fewer role models in society a few years ago.

And I even see this from B (older sister) too, like when she tells me stories about her students and then I just think that they are so lucky to have a teacher who is of different colour or whatever, but just to have a teacher who understands them that way. Unfortunately, I didn't. I mean I never did through junior high, elementary, high school…I've never had a teacher who could understand me that way. So I think that plays a big important part and I think that's why I probably felt more like I fit in with my peers because there was nobody who was older or anything like that outside of the homes here, who helped me feel more like I'm normal. I don't know. I think with B being a teacher and there's more coloured teachers now that are out there, they're getting into the school systems, I think this will help students a lot. I think even police officers and…like police officers even wear turbans and stuff like that, I think that is a good thing. I know there's that whole problem with Sikh's wearing the turbans and stuff like that….well I don't know if this…the police force or if it's just for military reasons, but some sort of issue, and I see it as being….I see it as being a symbol, a threat because kids are looking up as they are seeing people of positions like you said authority, and it plays a big part of even self worth that yeah, I can become that. You can see it

but you feel I can become that. I think that does play a part into it. I wish I had that a bit more....I do think that plays into how confident you are.

Society's increasing awareness and acceptance of diversity appears to have facilitated and enabled a younger generation of East Indian women to affirm and present their ethnicity more openly and with more self-confidence and pride. Canada's strong multicultural policy that was initiated in 1971 and formalized in the 1980s (Buchignani, 1984) can be partially credited for the markedly different experience of this younger generation of East Indian women. The increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the Canadian population has contributed to the development of a multicultural mosaic and has lead to developing a more accepting environment and attitude towards visible ethnic minority individuals.

East Indian Community's Attitudes

Although the issue of skin colour appeared to be the first instance that highlighted participant's racial and cultural differences, it is an issue that also presented challenges within their ethnic communities. From mainstream society, the comments and discriminatory behaviour could be very overt, however, within their communities the issue was framed differently. Being darker complexioned was also presented as undesirable but often couched within the context of being marriageable.

Yeah....I wasn't really.....there was a lot of cultural stuff sort of growing up too that was male/female dominating with regards to what their expectations were for me. My dad....my dad also has the stereotype that I was....I became a very dark

> child and I was too dark and he had this ritual – like up until I was 16 he made me wash myself once a week with coconut oil to fair my skin so that I would be marriageable – like he had that sort of internal fear that somehow I'd be too dark to be accepted.

Other girls learned a similar lesson from a young age when their family and friends would encourage them to stay out of sun or would comment about the blackness of their knees and elbows.

> I was in Florida, I was in grade 12 and my cousin <laughing> and I will never forget this cause I was like 'you guys made a four year old cry' is what I was telling the adults. Ok, my cousin was four and just a little cutie like we went to my cousin's wedding so we had a beach house, we rented this beach house and all the family was staying together and it was Florida. We were out in the sun all day, we had our bathing suits on, we were on the beach (inaudible) by the pool and my uncle goes and my cousin and I tan really quickly and… She's four and normally pretty fair, a normal colour I don't know whatever colour, and he goes "*you girls are so dark*" and she started crying, like just bawling. Once she stopped, once they calmed her down it was like "what's the big deal, why are you crying" she goes "cause Grandpa told me I was dark and dark is bad!" She was just devastated and I'm like <pause> how sad is that at the age of four she knows that to be called dark is something not to be proud of or that's not good, you know is like a swear word almost. [participant's emphasis in italics]

Coping Strategies

The reactions of others set the foundation for how these girls would perceive themselves. It also dictated how they learned to cope, revealing a range of coping behaviours and strategies. One woman described becoming more withdrawn and quieter as a child because she was always teased, while another described becoming angry and resentful as the target of similar comments. While a third participant recounted how being labelled as dark continues to affect her perception of herself and the way she continues to dress (i.e., covering her arms and legs).

> Oh, and it makes me sick. But it's still somehow in me too that I can't really....I don't know how to shake it in how I perceive myself. Not in other people at all, I get more defensive when it comes out with other people, but with me it still hits me. Because his dad [referring to father-in-law] will make comments and that's why I wonder if I don't wear tank tops half because of it...the exposure which would be weird in itself or small skirts....or is it in part because I don't feel....because I've always been told my knees and my elbows are so black....like I don't really know what it is deep inside of me – what's pushing that. I don't know if I will ever know.

> I swear, I used to be a kid and I'd hold my hand out and I don't get it. Am I dark? I still don't quite understand it. I'm in that camp, but everybody else seems to tell me otherwise. It's almost like.....maybe I was darker as a kid or maybe it's an Edmonton thing! <laughing> Get all my old pictures...look at me now! It might

> have been part being raised in Vancouver in their sun…God knows! Who knows, maybe I was darker but yeah, I remember thinking "what do you mean?" But remember that Hindi song – <inaudible> and he's singing to the different wives and…Anyway, he goes through all…he's singing a song to his friend about what to choose in a wife and you don't want the fat ones, you want the skinny ones and one of the ones was a dark one and we did a little skit for it – some of my Hindu friends and whatever and everyone's like obviously you're going to be the kahli, and I'm like that's me – I'm the black one? I didn't even know. But it comes up like that in ways.

The stigma that exists surrounding the issue of skin colour is both insidious and strongly entrenched in the culture. Even biracial girls grew up understanding that being too dark was both undesirable and unattractive. Several women talked about how being darker or lighter complexioned facilitated their ability "to pass" (perceived as White), which translated into being accepted more easily into mainstream society.

> And I think that that could be. I think that you know its funny because I apply it to my ethnic background because that's been really clear-cut where I have gotten that feedback you know where people have been prejudiced and really that same boyfriend had relayed a story of you know where one of his friends <inaudible> and the parents of this friend had said to him what are doing you should stick to your own kind. And then they had seen me [referring to being fair and attractive], and were like, I can see why you are dating her.

> Well, it's kind of interesting in that you know it feels like I can kind of blend. And I do think I do have a bit of a luxury of doing that <inaudible>. You know my friend who is half [biracial] <inaudible> she looks very, she has incredibly dark skin and that you know it's really funny because she is so identifiable as East Indian. What's interesting about that is she could never blend, do you know what I mean? And so a lot of the time my ethnic identity is not that apparent. And even if it is, a lot of people that I talk to don't know…I can pass and that blurs a little bit. I mentioned my one sister. You would really never in a million years guess that she was half anything. She really takes after my Mom <pause> and she passes all the time and is very comfortable in doing so, and can be uncomfortable identifying herself as East Indian.

While another participant's comments reflect how she is not identified as East Indian given her lighter complexion.

> When I tell people I'm East Indian – I think it comes as a bit of a shock…a lot of times people don't even think I'm East Indian. Like going…even in school and stuff, they don't know I'm East Indian unless I told them. They think I'm Spanish or something. So I don't know, I think that has a lot to do with it too, and I think a lot of my friends and a lot of the environments that I've been in have *not been*….have not had East Indian East Indians in it. I don't know if that's clear? [participant's emphasis in italics].

Being lighter skinned offered some reprieve from negative comments and some women revealed that they avoided the sun and tanning to preserve their lighter complexion and prided themselves on their lighter skin tone.

> Yeah, you know because it's funny because I think I've come a long way in that, I think that I certainly, and this could be an age thing too, but I am embracing much more the way I look. I used to make a conscious sort of effort not to appear too ethnic, I would avoid tanning. You know what I mean? <Laughing> my friends would be out tanning and I would be like… No, no I don't want to look any more East Indian than I am right now. Because I mean there was part of me that completely knew, even at that young age that that was…I am not sure if we talked about this the last time but there is a very real vivid memory for me probably from my Dad as well where I consciously first had the idea that Brown people are not as good as White people.

> But mostly, I wasn't really called names. As I got older, I have to say….you have a certain amount of relief, if not pride in the fact that I was lighter skinned than my other East Indian friends more than my other Asian friends. I had a friend who was Chinese or people that I knew that were black, I was lighter skinned……And as I was growing up, and I think about this now and I just….I can't really believe I felt that way, but I did. I said ok, "I'm not as dark which

therefore is not as noticeably different" which I somehow felt was better in my mind.

The advantages of being lighter skinned carried with it the ability to pass (for White) and consequently offered a degree of privilege and status that a girl could not obtain if she was darker. The inherent challenge presented by this issue is that while an individual can change many aspects of the personal presentation in order to "fit in", racial features are unchangeable in the same manner. The status and privilege that accompany the ability "to pass" can also be a source of internal tension and conflict based on denying one's ethnic identity.

For many participants in this study, the issue of skin colour left a lasting impression. It influenced how they perceived themselves and how they were perceived and treated by family members, within their community and by mainstream society. It seemed that an awareness of being racially different coupled with other cultural differences set in motion a process of self-questioning and self-evaluation for these young girls. Questioning who they were and where did they belong and fit-in became a defining theme throughout their childhood, adolescence and adulthood years.

Adolescence

Diversified Social Networks

Experiences in adolescence fell into two distinct groupings. For many of the women, a shift occurred in high school as they described moving from being the only East Indian or coloured child in school to gaining exposure to other ethnic minority children or other East Indians in high school. This was a more common experience for women who were between the ages of 20 and 30 and who grew up in urban centres such as Edmonton or Calgary. A second group of women described a continued sense of disconnection from their ethnic identity because throughout high school, they still fell into a minority category (numerically). These women were between the ages of 30 and 40 years and had grown up in smaller communities and cities in the prairie provinces. They grew up as essentially the only ethnic minority children in their school and therefore did not develop a sense of belonging/ fitting in, in either mainstream Canadian society or through a connection to other individuals from their ethnic community. Therefore, their personal struggle to develop a sense of personal congruence led them to associate more with Canadian culture because it was their main point of reference in the development of their cultural and personal value systems.

The first group, who gained exposure to other ethnic minority children in adolescence, described slowly realizing that they were not alone, nor were they "so different". Having East Indian friends in high school and in university played an influential role, helping them to gain a stronger sense of confidence, social connection, and pride in their ethnic heritage. For example, they no longer had to explain or defend their cultural and religious practices, food preferences, curfews, and conservative family

norms or behaviour – essentially, they began to feel normal because they were surrounded by other individuals who understood and also lived with their own set of cultural rules and expectations. Several participants commented about the shift in their social network that occurred in adolescence.

> And so I thought that the Orthodox church was a wonderful place for me to grow up in because there was a lot of people my age and we just had wonderful relationships that are still going on, and I felt like I had a very good support system around me and loved going to Sunday School and loved playing with my friends. And when we were growing up, just having people to talk to that had the same kinds of problems that I did, same kind of issues, same kinds of discoveries that we were going through as far as being East Indian....there were a lot of East Indian girls my age at my church that I socialized with on a regular basis and we talked about our parents said or did recently that bothered us, what was happening at school, in our homes, what we were thinking our feeling....that kind of thing.

> And you do kind of think of yourself as being different that is when I think you first realize it. In elementary you don't really cause everybody's friends, everybody's....nobody really cares about anything....<laughing>. I think that is when I realized- difference in the sense like boys and curfews and things like that. A lot of my girl friends couldn't understand why I wasn't able to go out and stay out past 10:30 at that time – and 10:30 was still really good, if I was to compare to

my East Indian friends like when I would go to dance class. I dance, and when I was younger that was the only East Indian group that I had, all the girls at dance class. Then I would go to school and they would be totally different. Once when I hit high school that is when I made a lot of East Indian friends and I think that is when I changed. I realized "wow, I guess I am not so different!" It helped me being friends with a lot of people who were like me because it didn't make me feel out of place. I think that did help a lot with it – and I think at that point too I started to...to get my act together.

And now that I'm older and now a lot of…I'd have to say even White people that I meet, they have more of an understanding, like they know more – and that's people my age. If I was to talk to people who are even B's (sister) age I think, I don't think they know as much. I think – even just within that age gap between seven years, it's made a big difference because there's more East Indian people now in our community so I think maybe that's why, they're getting more knowledgeable, they understand that issues we go through so they're maybe not so judgmental. But I definitely think that's played a part in me growing up. There is my peer group and who I was around and it helped me….I guess yeah, that's the challenges and difficulties I would say I went through. I didn't have so many challenges or difficulties in the household.

Rules of Conduct

Although the social circumstances for many girls improved in high school, many of them described adolescence as a period that was more conflictual with their parents. The issue of fitting in persisted as a theme in their lives and took the form of trying to gain more personal freedom. Many of them described having early curfews (i.e., 8pm), and this did not allow them to participate freely in the social activities with their peers (i.e., parties, sleepovers etc.). This presented more of an issue in the context of their Canadian/White friends. Interestingly, their parents did not seem to have the same rules in terms of East Indian friends. For example, receiving phone calls after 9pm at home was seen as unacceptable, particularly if boys were calling; however if East Indian friends called at this time, it was less problematic, particularly if they were female friends. None of the women offered a clear explanation as to why their parents were more understanding in some instances – for them the rules were clear.

> Like yeah, something's were....which are normal which every East Indian girl would go through, like I want to stay out until past 11pm or something, and even now still, I'm 21 and I mean I still have a curfew and I have....like my other friends, they all understand. I mean it happens. That's how things work, of course you're going to have a curfew. Guys can't call me past 10:00 pm or my parents are like why are they calling so late? Like if it was a girl, yeah, it's ok. But there are certain rules that I have to follow. And even one time when I was at work and I'd just got this job and one of my friends, he worked there and so he called me – he called me at 11 pm and I could tell my parents were not very happy and this

> was like three years ago! And it was just because it was a White guy calling me at 11:00 pm, it was like oh, what is this? They weren't too happy. But if it were to happen to somebody else, it wouldn't be such a big deal. I don't know what I'm trying to say…I guess it's just….they are definitely….there are definite differences with who I….I guess who I am and who maybe…maybe who White people are.

The arguments or conflicts they described with their parents did not seem extreme or unusual and through some negotiation they were able to extend some of their curfews and gain other privileges. However, it is important to note that they did not gain the same degree of personal freedom as their Canadian peers. None of the situations or arguments they described with their families resulted in children openly disobeying their parents or arguments escalating to extreme consequences (i.e., moving out of the house, being disowned, or physical abuse). It seemed, more often than not, that most girls followed and respected their parents' wishes and were overall compliant in their behaviour (at least overtly). It seemed that because their families had set stricter guidelines and limits that simply being able to extend their existing curfews or soften the rules was perceived as a privilege and often ended any disagreements.

Dating

Another issue that presented itself in adolescence was dating. There was a marked difference between the East Indian girls and their Canadian peers with respect to the acceptability of this behaviour. The East Indian girls were not permitted to date; however, they socialized with male friends at school or within their group of friends. Only two

participants described dating openly in high school. Although dating in the North American cultural context is seen as a normal aspect of adolescent behaviour and development, within the East Indian culture it is perceived as unacceptable. Another two women recounted stories of dating secretly in high school but from their descriptions of these relationships their dating usually occurred in a larger group setting or at school. For example, they would go out with several friends as a group and in that context see their "boyfriend". Their dating behaviour did not appear to involve going out alone on a date as it does in the North American context, and this difference can be attributed to the different limits on their personal freedom.

> Well I mean major ones have been dating because –this is a good story. I actually started dating when I was 16 or 17…high school, grade 11, and a lot of my friends – my Malayalee friends were dating at that time also, and 99% of us didn't tell our parents about it because our parents were very concerned about "you need to do well in school and achieve and worry about dating later." …..But anyway, I started dating when I was 17 and I was dating a Trinidadian fellow and he was Christian, his parents were Hindu. Both his parents were Hindu, but he actually started going to church with his elementary school friends because that was just something he [referring to boyfriend] did on Sunday mornings. So he went along and decided to check it out and just got drawn in and he was Christian and his parents were fine with that. So as far as my parents knew, we were just friends and they were….he didn't come to my house very often, just occasionally, and every time I went out I either told them it was with a group of people but a lot of

> times it was with a group of people …because in high school it was common for all of us to hang out in groups.
>
> So those issues for instance come up all the time. When we were in junior high and high school it was about should I be dating and if I am dating, should I tell my parents about it and if I don't tell my parents about it, well then I need someone to cover up for me. It's always those issues and we went through a lot of them together and going through all of those experiences together really have bound us quite close together. And I find even with Malayalees that I'm not that close with and don't socialize with on a regular basis, if we were all to sit around and just bring these topics up, we would be in animated conversation in a second because we have very similar stories and we share very similar experiences.

Many women did not date until they attended university, and even at that point it was not something they did openly. The priority and expectation for East Indian children is to focus their attention and energy on academic achievement. While socializing and having friends is acceptable, the parameters of social activities usually centre on the family, community, or religious activities. The expectation and demand is that children will strive for academic excellence. Valuing education is ingrained from an early age in all East Indian children.

Most women described their high school years as passing without excessive external turmoil between themselves and their parents and occasional instances of racism or discrimination. Even the arguments and conflicts with parents were not presented as

dramatic or traumatic issues. However, inwardly, their self-questioning and personal assessment of who they were and where they belonged continued.

Sharing Culture

As they matured developmentally, they also appeared to gain self-confidence in asserting their ethnic identity and not hiding or curbing their East Indian-ness. This was evidenced in their decision to bring East Indian food in their school lunches and accept their physical features (having coarser and darker hair, darker skin). They also began to share aspects of their cultural heritage with their White friends (i.e., Hindi films and music) and invite their friends to join them in celebrating religious holidays or cultural festivities in the community (i.e., attend Mosque or Divali celebrations).

> I never took East Indian food in junior high. That's the time when you want to fit in, that's the time when you wear the same clothes as everybody else, and you kind of figure out your identity and you're making new friends that you didn't have in elementary school or where ever. But in high school I kind of just said forget it, I'm not going to have sandwiches everyday or I'm not going to do this because so and so did it. I didn't really care. So in university didn't really care. I had....my friends are predominantly not East Indian. They're all different races and cultures too and I think for me that was a bonus – having people of different cultures as my friends – Asians, I have two really good friends that are black and they understand that they have a culture too as do I, you don't get so questioned on things because your culture is your culture, where you're from and they

understand that. It was more of the Canadian – the White people that didn't understand what you were doing because it was new to them.

So the three of us are East Indian, Spanish and she is White. When someone thinks she is Spanish she feels confident…it's kind of different because I don't think it would have been like that about ten years ago – it wasn't like you wanted to look like you were another race or. So it's kind of neat. But now you can kind of show off who you are and it's so cool! I will show my friends pictures of me dressed up and they won't think it is weird. While when I was younger they always knew that I took dancing and they've seen me in my other outfits but I wouldn't be specifically showing it to them. Because I knew it wasn't anything cool. And now I'm kind of like "oh, look what I got", and when I came back from India I brought them all bindis and things like that because they're all in style now.

It's more like you're not ignoring it but you're kind of like emphasizing it. Now I'll put my pictures up on my wall or if I have an East Indian CD playing, well that's fine and I'll let them [referring to friends] listen to it. So if there's a new song I'll make them listen to it because there is a lot of that mix of East Indian music and so it is familiar to her and she enjoys it. Whereas before, I don't think I'd ever do that. I wouldn't throw the CD's out or play it for them. So it's just neat to do that now. I guess you just feel more comfortable with who you are.

While the self-questioning continued, it began to transform itself into evaluating which cultural influences they wanted to retain, maintain and integrate into their lives. Fundamentally this involved beginning to analyze, deconstruct and reconstruct their East Indian values, attitudes, and beliefs as they began to negotiate their ethnic identity for themselves. Their self-questioning was not always a conscious process, but the ways in which they tried to fit in to both cultural spheres exemplified this process. For example, there were periods in their lives in which they were more entrenched and connected to their ethnic and religious communities through their families. However, later in life, they began to question and reassess which aspects of their cultural identity were more personally meaningful. This tended to emerge in adolescence and young adulthood and as a result, they adopted a more active role and stance in affirming their ethnicity or connecting to it out of personal choice rather than out of a sense of obligation enforced by their parents. Their East Indian-ness and meaning of being East Indian took on different levels of meaning and became informed by a more personal connection than being defined by society's attitudes and reactions to their East Indian-ness. The central theme of their adult experience of biculturalism was connected to acknowledging and reevaluating how they wanted to live their ethnic identity. In negotiating this process, they went through periods in which their ethnic identity held more or less meaning, connection, and salience in their lives, how this was reflected in the social relationships, networks, activities, and personal sense of congruence.

Disconnection from Community

Another dimension of their lives also connected to how well they fit into their ethnic community. Many women described knowing how to function within their

communities but simultaneously not always feeling completely at ease in those milieus. Their disconnection was communicated through different examples which included feeling like they were not "East Indian enough", not having been raised in the community as children and therefore being an outsider when they did attend different functions or simply not relating to living a very traditional East Indian lifestyle.

> I think the not fitting in with our community would apply just because we're not the typical East Indian family as well. I think that makes our culture a little more uncomfortable. I think because in our culture males are such a....like the head of the family like the fathers are the ones that are the dominating ones in the family – but because I don't have that....but I think within families – family's that are close to each other and stuff – it's because the fathers get along really well and I think a lot within our community....like a lot happens when it's just the female or male – I think it makes other families uncomfortable in the sense....just in the sense of...like there's someone for the husband to talk to or I don't know....I know a lot of the stories that go around when I was growing up and stuff just...it was just different I think. I just think....I feel that I felt more I didn't fit in with our community – our East Indian community – than I didn't fit in with other people – like in our church or other places just because of that – just because we don't have the typical family household. I don't know if that makes sense.

> Well because a lot of these kids that went to the East Indian school where they learned Malayalum and stuff, they went to school together all the time – like

> every week they'd get together and they had picnics and India this and India that – and stuff like that. And I never did any of that so I didn't build relationships with them through any of those activities. I think if I had, it would have been different. I think maybe then…I mean then I'd have friends in the community so it would be different. As it is right now, I have maybe….I've gotten a lot more friends in the community because of university – because we're in university together, that's where we're together – when you see each other and stuff like that. But I never grew up with them, so a lot of them know each other because they grew up together. Like they went on vacations together….like there's tons of families that went on vacations together. It is like a big family but we were never part of that because we never did any of the stuff.

Family and Community Cultural Expectations

Many women described understanding very clearly the implicit and explicit cultural expectations. One participant aptly described this as "living in the box". Living in the box meant having the progression of your life defined and predetermined for you. This meant living your life according to the expectations that you would be well educated as a doctor, lawyer, engineer, or some other professional, "white-collar" occupation, and that you would marry an East Indian man from the same background and religious community, have children, and raise them within the community. The majority of women recounted the same series and progression of events as expectations for their lives, and following this plan constituted being a "a good East Indian girl".

So that was hard. That was outside of the box and I felt like I had to hide it. I can talk about the way that we want to live, now I can talk about the kind of travel that we want to do and that we're planning to do together and be ok with it, whereas before when that box felt really <inaudible> to me, I felt like I had to live a much more, or pretend that I was living a much more traditional and good life. And now I can talk about <inaudible> or untraditional and just kind of show up in baby stages and not really worry about that. Whereas before I was very aware of what people might think about that and very aware of being outside of what was typical. See like, it seems that that whole fitting in piece to me is…it's not just about fitting in, in the sense of where do I look….what do I seem like I look like to people around me? It's….when people talk about fitting in and then I thought about fitting in, I felt that in order to fit-in in the East Indian community in which I was raised, I had to….there was a plan that was already laid out for me and so I was supposed to go to school and go to university and I was supposed to get married by the age of 23 and then my husband was supposed to be a certain <inaudible> and also a professional and who had an ideal of family and working hard and making money and buying a house – a big house – and then our life would be about buying a certain kind of house and having a family and raising that family and then we would take family vacations to other places, like what people in the East Indian community do. And our weekends would be spent visiting family and other people and we'd go to functions….that's sort of what I feel was laid out for me and when I see a lot of my friends followed that path – that's what they do – that's exactly what they have done. And so when I didn't do

> that, when I didn't get married by 23 and when I carried onto further education, so I felt like I was now doing things that were outside of that box but I felt like…the way I conceptualized it is that I still had to see….I was going to be inside the box as much as I could be and I still had to pretend that I wanted to find an East Indian man and get married to him and live out as much of that path as I could.

Adolescence was another period of transition in the lives of these women. Many moved into this stage of life and developed a more diverse social network that normalized their experience as visible ethnic minority individuals. This, in turn, facilitated developing a stronger and more confident connection to their ethnic identity. Some women did not have the opportunity to extend their social network in the same fashion and remained isolated within a visible minority status. Adolescence was also a period that fostered the beginning of more profound questioning and self-analysis about the meaning of their ethnic identity. As younger children, they had lacked the ability to assert themselves, however as adolescents they gained this ability by testing some limits. Their testing of limits was expressed as seeking more personal freedom and never crossed into more serious or problematic behaviour, but this can be framed as the beginning of deconstructing and reconstructing their value systems, asserting and testing how to bring together two cultural influences in their lives – a process that continued throughout their adulthood.

Table 4
Cultural Expectations for East Indian Females

Cultural Values	Parental Expectations	Rules of Conduct
Family	• Commitment to extended family • Individual behaviour reflects family's honour and reputation in the community	• Deference to authority • Serve family above and beyond anyone or anything else
Retain Ethnic Identity	• Socialize within the community • Maintain cultural and religious practices/traditions • Marry Indian man preferably from the same religious background	• Remain at home until married • Uphold cultural values, and traditions (i.e., language, gender roles, food, dress, and religious practices)
Respect for elders	• Obedience and deference towards the authority of elders in the family and the community	• Accepting the authority and wisdom of elders to make decisions for you • Respectful behaviour, language, and dress in the presence of elders
Purity and Innocence	• Minimal social and physical interaction with boys • Remain a virgin until married	• No phone calls from boys • No dating • Limited social contact with boys in general (particularly White boys) • Modest and platonic interactions with boys (not flirtatious or assertive).
Education	• Excel academically	• Sole responsibility as a child is to study, excel academically, and pursue university education (preferably in sciences, medicine, law or engineering)
Occupation	• White collar professional career - status associated with occupation	• Family's reputation and honour associated with child's occupational success

Adulthood

Diversity in Social Networks

As young women in their 20s, who were attending university, these women described becoming more self-assured and comfortable with their ethnic identity. They either continued to have East Indian friends or found themselves making more East Indian friends once they entered university. These friendships and social connections facilitated an immersion in or re-discovery of their cultural identity. Again, as in high school, being surrounded by a diverse ethnic and racial community in an academic milieu facilitated a sense of belonging and fitting in that they had not always experienced as children. They recounted developing a comfort zone with these new friends that centred on having these individuals understand their life styles, personal choices, family values, and the restrictions with which they lived with. They no longer felt like they had to explain, defend, or apologize for their differences, which was a common occurrence with their Canadian/White friends.

Tensions in Social Networks

The tensions they commonly experienced with White friends included explaining why they did not date or why they continued to live at home as adults, or their reserved manner in specific social interactions and dialogue.

> I haven't experienced racism too much in my life, I haven't. Yeah there are cultural differences like even talking to the staff at school, but I'm the type now, I'll tell them....they'll be like "Oh, you still live at home?" and you're 28 and you live at home. And then I say it to them, I say well in our culture unless I've

moved out of the city or I'm married, there is no reason to leave. I go we don't kick our kids out at 18 and say go live on your own. And I explain it all to them and then they see yeah, it does make sense. And also I've dated a few white guys and it was hard for them to understand that too when you have to explain it, like I wouldn't mind living on my own honestly. It would be nice too, but it's just out of respect. Nobody does it, you talk to any East Indian guy or girl, unless they've moved out of the city or they're married, is the only time they'll leave the house and what's wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that. Your parents want you to save the money and look at it this way – look at all the other things I can do.

I was taking courses there [referring to college] and I made two white friends But when we would sit down to talk, I didn't know how to talk....like I didn't know what to say because everything....like I was just so different from them – like they'd be talking about their boyfriends and stuff like that and just.....too much in detail with what they might do with their boyfriends and what not. Like I personally think it's something more personal. So I was like "Oh yeah, oh yeah" and I just didn't say much and then one day they were like why are you so quiet? Does it bother you? And I'm like no, it doesn't bother me, I just don't know what to say. And they're like well what about you – you're experiences. And they could not get over the fact that I was a 20-year-old virgin. It was just too hard for them to understand. And I didn't like that, it made me feel like well why does that have to be so important? Like I don't care if you are or if you aren't, so that

> kind of thinking…they're like so you just don't want to? I got all these questions and I didn't like it. I'm like it's just personal! And I mean, this is something….it's a personal choice, but they just thought that was really, really weird. And I didn't like that. I really did not like that. Of course not! But I think things like that – maybe it's just experiences that I've gone through, not everybody has gone through these kinds of things. So I think I just feel a lot more in place. I mean if I was to talk to my East Indian friends, they would…like first of all we don't even talk about things like that and even if we were to, it's not like anybody would like "oh why are you so different or why are you so odd or something". It's not a big deal.

Results of Cultural Anchoring

As adults, the self-questioning and negotiation of who they were took another twist. It seemed that there was an increased ability and willingness to see the advantages of their upbringing, and the value of the connection they had established with their ethnic heritage. For example, as young children taking Hindi language classes was boring and time consuming; however, as young adults, they found it useful to be able to converse fluently in a second language and communicate with their friends or within their community. This ability qualified as unique skill in comparison to their Canadian peers. Several women described valuing and continuing their involvement in cultural activities, such as dance and language classes, without parental encouragement. Several of them described reaching a level of proficiency that enabled them to now teach the younger generation of East Indian children and to lead youth groups in their communities.

In the beginning your parents kind of lead and I feel that with almost all my friends who are East Indian. When are parents first come and when you are young they really you to be involved in the culture. I just think they don't want it to be lost. I can remember taking Hindi classes every Saturday and I probably did that until I was in grade 11 or something – it was a really long time. And went to dance class <inaudible> and it's funny because then....like it used to seem like that was always forced upon you. I mean, I like the dancing and I don't really mind Hindi class, but it was kind of like it wasn't something that I chose to do on my own, it was because my parents were like ok, "do what we do!" And it's different because now I think it's all those things, like you're kind of....your values or the types of things I was taught then when I was really young, but at the same time it feels different. I notice myself now or with my mom and what I was taught then I can't get rid of it now. It doesn't matter how big <inaudible> I always like to keep up my dancing because I want to and my mom has told me like "no why are you going, you're wasting your time...." but I'm the one who says "I want to go", and even if its not necessarily something I have to do – like I quit ballet and <inaudible> And for Hindi classes I did it until I was 11 years old I felt like my parents are making me do this but then - not this year but the year before...or two years, me and my friends were like <inaudible> teaching the little kids, kindergarten kids and stuff and that was because we wanted to. We weren't able to teach this year and we were kind of upset, we're not able to keep those but it was my choice to do the same things and my parents <inaudible>. I think that I have gained interest in them on your own.

In this way, they became role models and mentors to a new and upcoming generation of East Indian children. Their motivation often came from wanting the younger generation to know their culture, to be proud of it and not struggle as much as they had in their youth to connect and identify with their East Indian-ness. Through the persistence and insistence of their parents during childhood, these women established a strong connection to their culture.

Absence of Cultural Anchoring

It is important to note that these experiences were more common for the women who had grown up with a stronger initial anchoring in their ethnic communities and culture. The women who did not grow up with the familiarity or connection to the East Indian community in their childhood described feeling more at odds and struggling with developing a sense of their East Indian-ness. Because they had grown up with limited exposure to their cultural heritage in the absence of extended family or an East Indian community, their connection to their ethnicity was shaped and informed more explicitly by North American attitudes and values. Although they underwent a similar personal process as the first group of women, their discovery of their culture required a more focused and active attention and commitment to learn about their heritage, culture and roots through their own efforts and through actively seeking out this knowledge and connection.

> Well, I think it....I think.....connect slightly with it but not strongly with it and I think part of that is because I did grow up in Canada and being...when I grew up in (name of town), being one of the few.....few, few, few visible minorities, that

> eight years of being constantly reminded that you're different, but at the same time you're struggling to fit in. So you don't have any other East Indian people to actually associate with or to identify with. I mean there's one or two other families, but we didn't spend a lot of time with them. So you don't end up reinforcing some of those....some of the identity of being East Indian and you feel almost isolated in it. So like moving to Calgary would have been the first time that I was ever around an East Indian population. By then, I didn't fit in because hadn't gone to.....I mean, I was Anglican, I wasn't practicing some of East Indian faiths. I didn't know a lot of people, so you're kind of left in limbo where you sort of....you kind of identify with white, White-Canadians because you've been raised in the culture, so you know some of the things that go on. But you're still never going to be Canadian, White-Canadian.

For the first group of women anchoring seemed to require simply reconnecting to resources that they had grown up with and may have distanced themselves from. As young adults in their 20s, the issue of fitting in and belonging persisted, but it became less salient, nor was fitting in perceived to be function of what was deemed to be normal according to mainstream society. Determining and establishing a personal niche between two cultural worlds became a more self-directed process and inquiry. The common thread running through their stories reflected the importance of retaining their East Indian-ness while maintaining elements of their Canadian values and attitudes.

> So that's part of....when I think of that in relation to fitting in, that's what comes up because I don't feel like I struggle with it as much as I did struggle with it. But,

> I still see it as an issue at times for me. But more....it's more in the background and the times it comes up are you know....I think like recently I went to this show in the East Indian community – the fund-raiser that I'm working for was being presented a cheque there and so there were actually...it one of first times that T (husband's name) and I have gone out as a couple in the East Indian community and so that was kind of an interesting thing for me and it felt ok, I thought I'd feel more worried about fitting in and bringing a non-East Indian with me and how would people look at me and all that – and that felt ok. And I realized that some of that worry and concern about fitting in is my own anxiety about it – being brought up in the family I was brought up in where I've been taught that in order to fit in, you have to look and behave....your life has to be in certain...a very certain way and my ideas now about fitting in are changing in that part of it now I feel that if you're good and comfortable with where you're at, and you show you're in a comfortable place, the fitting in seems to happen more easily.

Marriage (Retention versus Loss of Culture)

For many women, facing the issue of marriage brought to the forefront a renegotiation of their ethnic identity. Contemplating the issue of marriage brought the following concerns (a) marrying an East Indian or non-East Indian man, (b) having an arranged marriage or a love marriage, (c) dating a man outside of their religious group (i.e., Hindu girl dating or marrying a Muslim or Christian boy), (d) the family's reaction to their choice of partner, (e) his families ability to mix well with their family, and (f) being prepared to avoid beginning a relationship with someone they knew their parents would not approve of whether based on religion, family background or race. These issues

were mentioned more frequently by the younger cohort regardless of their religious backgrounds and reflected the importance of retaining their ethnic heritage and cultural values.

> Like I still would not be able to give it up, I think it would have been an issue with me and (fiancé), but yeah, there's issues with uniting with another person and what they bring to the relationship and especially with (fiancé) because he does come from such a different kind of background – same community, different parents, different outlook, different values. And we have to bring that all together and bring two families together as well. So there's definitely a shift in…I think the shift in focus is more on the future and children and your spouse and not so much on how am I going to fit in. But more of how are my kids going to fit in, how am I going to fit in with my spouse? How is he going to fit in with me? Are we going to fit in to our families? Are our families going to fit in with each other? That sort of thing. I'm not so concerned about myself anymore.

> But now, now I want to fit in….I don't want to lose my culture and I don't have enough of it to pass it on to my own kids in myself. I feel like I need some help with that. If I….and getting married surrounds that a lot because if I marry someone who's not East Indian, then I don't feel like I have enough East Indian in me to pass it onto my kids. So I don't want to lose my culture, so there are some pressures that I put on myself to be aware of that choice I make and how it impacts my kids in the future. So I want to fit in that way. I want to fit into my

culture where I don't lose my culture, I want to be a part of it. : Ah....there isn't anything to do really about that. I just kind of get to....get to the bottom of what I want I guess. What I want ultimately is to have a good relationship with someone. That's what being married is about and making a life together. But there's a part of me that says I don't want to lose my culture and that is not something that is words spoken to me by my grandmother or my father or my mom or my brother. It's just my own desire that if I am not able to teach my language to my kids, that's one thing – I don't want them to learn to speak Malayalee but if they lose some of those cultural values that I myself....if I was with someone who had the same culture as I do, East Indian culture, then I could probably very easily pass that on. But in myself, I don't think that I have enough of it to pass it on.

How do I take these values and stuff and how I live outside....well, how I live myself yeah, I think that's where religion does come into it. I'm a very strong believer in <inaudible> which is what people <inaudible> and karma . So I'm a big believer in that and I do believe that's how I do live my life outside – based upon my actions and what not. And so I believe that outside my duty is to be a good student, my duty is to be just a good person and so it's based upon my actions. That is basically how I live my life outside, so it is still based upon these traditions and these values in my head of these two important aspects of what I think, but I will live my life accordingly to these things I believe. Now, if you're talking about lets say cultural wise, I would be with somebody, but not like four

different guys. I wouldn't do that because – just because of my parents. But also because I've seen what....I don't know, I just have this whole different way of thinking also about dating – maybe because I've seen what my sister has gone through as well [sister dated a Christian boy], and I just....I just didn't always think it was so much worth it, and I think that's also played into effect about how I am. So it's not just about culture and stuff, not just what my parents think, it's because the experiences that I've seen around me and so I think that lets say dating wise, if I was to date somebody, I would choose to date somebody based on if 1) he's serious not just ok, whatever screwing around and stuff like that, no. If this guy, he needs to think serious and he needs to know that I'm not just going to be with him just for whatever. Yeah, we're going to have to get to know each other of course, and through that process of getting to know each other, I would not say anything to my parents. I would not tell my parents....just to not only make things easier on me, it's not just ___ on me, but it's also to make things easier for them. Not so much strain and stress. I would choose who I'd be with based on what my parents find important as well. So I wouldn't date...like I wouldn't date a Muslim guy because I know that wouldn't happen with my parents.

Contemplating these issues required that these women to revisit and renegotiate how they wanted to situate themselves in their lives, families, and within their communities in the future. Choosing to delay marriage until their late 20s or choosing to marry a non-East Indian man led to a re-examination of their personal and cultural values

and ethnic identity. Although the issue of fitting in was no longer a salient issue in their lives, they realized that it continued to have indirect implications in their life choices. For example, choosing to marry a non-East Indian would be an atypical decision and might partially disconnect them from their ethnic community and hence lead to a sense of "not fitting in".

> Yeah. And I was marrying someone white and an arranged marriage was really, my parents really wanted me to have an arranged marriage and do the "right thing" as the East Indian culture. And that wasn't for me. I found someone that I wanted to be with and he wasn't East Indian and he wasn't an arranged marriage. So that was really hard on my parents. That was probably the hardest thing that I have done to my parents I think in terms of culture shock and their expectations for their children in coming to Canada and me marrying someone who wasn't East Indian was probably a big thing for them. But, we got over it because I told them that I wasn't going to do an arranged marriage and this is who I was going to marry and they could take it or leave it was pretty much my attitude by the time everything was said and done. And they did. They had no choice. And the whole community has embraced him, every time we go back to Calgary everyone…we get invited to everything, people always talk to him and stuff like that – which I never thought would happen because people said some pretty awful stuff as you can imagine. I didn't care. It didn't bother me because how long were they going to talk about me for ten years? So what. After ten years they're going to stop talking right. People have to stop talking at a certain….at a certain point. And something is going to happen either three months or six months or even ten years

> from now that they're going to forget about me and talk about somebody else. That's the way people are. I'm not going to be a hot topic any more – someone else is going to do something that's going to be a hot topic and it's not going to be me. Plus I was moving away, so I didn't care.

There was only one woman in this study who had an arranged marriage and married a man from India. She reported that although choosing to marry in this traditional style presented some challenges, she believed that fundamentally it helped her to reconnect more solidly with her ethnic and cultural roots and identity. The significance she placed on marrying an East Indian man paralleled the ideas that other women had made about maintaining cultural continuity and congruence.

> Like for instance, you know, had I married out of the culture, who knows if I would have wanted to keep the culture and instil the culture in him [referring to her son] like teaching him how to speak Hindi and Punjabi so when he does go to India, he will be able to communicate with his relative as we weren't able to do when we were younger. And we didn't know what to say most times<pause> with (son), I'd want him to learn is how to write so he can write letters to his Grandmother, so she is able to communicate with him....Those are some things that I want to do so that he understands who he is and where he's from. Um, what I've trying to express is that I've made myself more East Indian in the sense that I <pause> the relationship that I have with me and my husband...is <pause> what am I trying to say? <pause> My friend (name) looks at me, and she says you have

> changed into a very different person… and I'm like well is that a good compliment or a bad compliment? She's like well in some ways it's good and in some ways it's bad. You've very East Indian in the way, in the way you where if I do have an opinion that I believe in sometimes I won't say it because I know culturally it's not the right thing to say. Or if I say that to (husband) he is not going to understand what I am trying to tell him. And so instead of trying to get into it with him and trying to explain it, I'll just let it go.

Another young woman, who was still single, anticipated that as a Hindu, marrying a Muslim boy would present too many challenges, and therefore she completely avoided getting involved with a Muslim boy. This participant's example also demonstrates the influence that family holds in the context of marriage. Within the East Indian community, marriage creates a connection not only between individuals but also between families. Based on the significance given to family within the East Indian culture, creating dissonance and discord in marrying a man your family disapproves of is a risky venture.

> Things like for my friends, they understand if I liked a Muslim guy but I'm like ok, I can't be with him, nothing is going to happen, not for the future, and my parents wouldn't allow for it, and what's going to happen? What's going to happen for our future that would be my main concern. And all my friends would be like yeah, I understand, holy shit you'd get into so much trouble if you were with him and what not. And….<pause> …No. No way. But if I was to…actually though one of my friends, she's Phillippino and she said to me one day – because

> she really wanted to introduce me to this one guy, and I don't know why she wanted to, but I was like no, no no. And she's like no, he's interested and I'm like yeah, whatever and I'm like what's his name? She said (name of boy) and you can tell he's Muslim and I said no…I'm like that's not going to happen. And she's like why not? I said well my parents wouldn't be too happy about that. And she's like why not, he's brown, that's all that matters! I said no, it doesn't actually. I'm like no, my parents wouldn't be happy of what would come of it. And even if she understood why I was saying no and I'm like well there's no future, but she didn't really understand and was kind of like well what's the big issue?

With regard to considering an arranged or love marriage, many women talked about not believing in formal and traditional arranged marriages that required their families to find a husband from India. Arranged marriages were the norm among the majority of their East Indian parents, with the exception of mixed marriages (biracial couples). However, they were not opposed to having their parents participate in making informal introductions to eligible families and then allowing them to make their own choices about pursuing a relationship. This was the common sentiment among many of the women who wanted to marry an East Indian man. The desire to marry an East Indian man was often based on wanting a partner who would understand their culture, with the underlying assumption that this would result in fewer cultural clashes. The other idea that guided this thinking was that marrying an East Indian man would also lend congruency and facilitate raising children within the East Indian culture and community.

However, when marrying an East Indian man was not seen as a priority, dating or marrying White men appeared to be the norm. Interestingly, only two women in this study reported dating men of another ethnicity (i.e., West Indian and African-Canadian). The women who did eventually marry non-East Indian men also held a similar desire to maintain their ethnic and cultural traditions. Their non-East Indian partners strongly encouraged and respected their needs to remain connected to their families, communities, and cultural heritage. Their partner's willingness to embrace the East Indian culture, traditions and practices was evidenced in their participation in East Indian activities and respecting cultural and religious traditions regarding marriage and children. For example, one Hindu woman described how her husband (non-East Indian) and his family eagerly participated and hosted the Hindu ceremony for her baby shower:

> His family has really.....we just had a baby shower and I don't know if you know, but in the Hindu religion they do a baby shower between 7 and 8 months when the woman is pregnant and it's all done by the in-laws. My mother in law does it all. So when this whole thing came up my mom was saying well maybe we should just do a small one and I'll get someone to step in for J, J is my mother in law. And I said are you kidding? Why don't you just ask her, she'd love to do it. And they asked her and J's (husband) mom was there in a sari and she did the whole ceremony and she had no....she was ecstatic that my parents asked because usually my parents are just kind of "well it's not your culture so you don't..." my parents are very much "well it's not your culture so you don't have to do it". And her answer now is "Well it's (name) culture, and (name) is part of our

> family, so yes, I do have to do it. I want to do it". And she showed up in a sari, my sister-in-law showed up in a sari, my brother in laws were there....her sister – she was part of the ceremony, she was wearing a salwar outfit and grandma was there....they were all dressed up. They were all wearing sari's and everything and we had to give them the opportunity to be open to our culture just as we've been open to their culture. And when you allow people to be open, I think they kind of walk right in, and she's done that. She went over to my mom's house three days in a row before the ceremony to find out exactly what she had to do – because she didn't know. No one told her...ok, exactly what do I have to do and why am I doing it? She wanted to know why so I gave my mom the opportunity to explain to her why things are being done. And she loved it. She loved being part of it. She loved being part of the culture. She said to us numerous times that you should teach the baby Gujarati, make sure that the baby learns the different language because that's part of who you are and they're very open to that.

Further to the issue of integrating their cultural values, several women described how their connection and commitment to family positively influenced and transformed their partner's relationship with their own families. For these women, the loss of their culture was not an issue in marrying a non-East Indian man. Although some cultural values and traditions might have been negotiated to accommodate both North American and East Indian values, their East Indian-ness was not comprised but rather embraced and prioritized in their marriages. Again, a common theme in the issue of marriage appeared

to be the ability to retain and maintain one's ethnicity and heritage as a function of choosing a partner.

Pressure to Marry

Although these considerations are weighty issues, another consideration was the pressure that many single women felt from family members to get married once they were over the age of 26 years.

> Like expectations or am I perceiving it differently than what he is? I think both of them – how it's given and then how you perceive it, both play a factor. Like marriages and things like that....I don't like the fact that the pressure is there. And that's all I feel – that's all it is in this house I swear sometimes. It's like when are you going to get married? And when you are going to settle down? So that's kind of hard just to constantly hear it. But they're good too, they're not....they would like to see me married but they know as well too that I'm the type....like I'm going to want someone....like I'd rather be alone and happy than with someone and unhappy. Nor am I going to settle either. And I don't have....like my mom says you're too picky, but I don't think I'm picky at all. It's just....it's the choices that are here. So in that sense it is hard and I think it's hard with East Indian culture because that's all it is for girls is about the marriage. They don't talk much about ok build up this character or career choices or anything like that. They don't touch on that so much, it's just all about getting married and once you're married ok, that's fine. It's like they've done their job and wash their hands clean of you. It's like that's their duty in life, if they have a girl is to get the

> person married. And I don't know if it's just a Punjabi thing, or if there is throughout India or what not. So the focus is always on the kids – what's going on with....like when are you going to get married and what are you doing....because my older sister is 28 and she is not married yet and that's been a major concern for my parents right now. So how do we get her to meet people....they're seeing it as she's refusing to get married, that's not the issue. The right person hasn't come up and she's not going to marry Joe Blow off the street because it's my life. So that's always an issue in our house. I think that's probably one of the major tensions because my youngest sister is involved with a Malayalee guy and she....she's pretty close to getting married also, as am I, but my older sister is struggling with this and so you can see what kind of issues there are because how can you let your two younger sisters get married before you, how come you're not meeting anybody, and she actually....I should tell you this story too.

The pressure to get married can be significant for some women. They reported feeling stress and pressure because of the frequent comments by parents and extended family about their status as single woman. Their stress was compounded by the apparent concern and distress their families felt about their single status. Nonetheless, no participants indicated that their families forced them (or their older female siblings) into marriage or into having an arranged marriage after a certain age. How the issue of increasing age and marriage is eventually resolved within the family was not mentioned by any participants, perhaps because it continued to remain a pressing concern with respect to older siblings.

Family Expectations

Typically, family expectations included completing one's university education and then getting married. Because education is valued highly in the East Indian culture and by the community at large, getting an education served at least three objectives. One objective can be understood as connected to status and the ability to secure a good career and income. A second purpose of acquiring a good education assures that a girl can be self-sufficient and able to support herself if the need arises. A third and more implicit objective (in a very traditional sense) is assuring a good match, that is an educated girl is more likely to find a "suitable boy" to marry.

Dilemma of Education

Indian adolescent girls have been encouraged to excel academically, and many choose to pursue higher levels of education. In so doing, marriage is postponed or delayed, while many contemporary East Indian women postponing marriage until their late 20s or even into their early 30s. This shift in marrying age was noted to cause stress and concern within their families. Several women commented that they noticed in their generation and 15 years ago, East Indian girls still married between the ages of 21 to 24, but now many delayed marriage while they completed their education or established their careers.

> Well I think the whole marriage thing itself, there are so many of our family friends that have mixed marriages. In general, I think it's different because when I was younger I saw all these girls getting married at 21 or 22 and I look back now and I think that was really young. And now I don't think I would get married

before I was 26, cause its not so young anymore. I don't know if it's good or bad <laughing> <inaudible>. It just seems like when <inaudible>. It seems they knew ten years ago that they were going to get married and that was just supposed to happen. And some of them are doctors and lawyers and have been in school for a really long time, by the time you're done and you even start thinking about it. And I know for my parents even they think you should get married early and shouldn't wait too long. And a lot of my uncles and aunts say the trend is going towards later marriages but they also believe that you should marry the guy at 25 <laughing>. That is just another kind of issue that I can see…not necessarily causing problems but its something you hear more for girls and not for boys as much – its more of a girl issue. Where the parents still believe even the ones that are pretty modern and open-minded they still believe that a girl shouldn't marry too late. I can see that for myself it's a little bit conflicting in that way. I see so many women doing so much now a days, doing double degrees so they're not just doing a bachelor degree. You are so busy with making your own life that it is hard to think about "ok lets get married", and not be concerned about that other stuff. I think the ones that do get married are either done their education or are ready…<inaudible> I think for myself I would want to get married early but at the same time there is so much that I want to do.

Many women continued to live at home unless their studies required them to move away. While studying or working they described feeling constant pressure from family members to get married, and they found this to be a reminder that they had yet to

fulfill this objective in their lives. Two participants in their early 30s, were single women not living at home, and they had lived independently of their families for several years after completing their education. Although at the time of being interviewed they were both engaged and in their early 30s they appeared to represent the trend that other women in the study were describing.

Experiences of Mature Women

Aside from the issue of marriage and children, re-evaluating how they wanted to live their East Indian-ness was an ongoing theme as these women entered their 30s. Negotiating their ethnic and cultural identities and values became an issue that was dictated by their personal values rather than by external pressures and demands. The more mature women in the study recounted how their lives were no longer structured or dictated by the external demands and expectations of their family or even their ethnic community. As they entered their 30s, they became comfortable in challenging and redefining cultural rules and expectations for themselves. However, it was a process that emerged through reflection, personal struggle and loss. The category of fitting in had faded into the background and did not preoccupy their attention and energy as it had during their adolescence and young adulthood. Consequently, they were more capable of establishing personal boundaries. For example, the idea of living out of the box exemplified the difference in one participant's life from her adolescence and early adulthood in comparison to her current life.

So, my experience of being an East Indian woman now is....I feel like I've turned my back on that East Indian place. I feel like I'm almost, there are these two separate pieces – *not that I'm two separate pieces* but that there are these two separate pieces and that I've turned my back on *that one* because *I'm not allowed to have that one with this one.* Like the way I want it to be is, I want both pieces, but it feels like the rules of the old ones that don't allow me to have it both of them. The rules of the new one would permit it, but the rules of the old one *don't.* And so, I feel like I'm forced to make a choice and I feel like I've gone to the point of no return where I have entered the new one and I see....a lot of that – for what I think it is? – which I am sure I put many illusions behind it, but that I can't go back, to find a way to fit into the old one. But in my true core inside me, I feel really <inaudible>. Like not the intolerant beliefs, there's just this feeling inside myself where I know I'm <inaudible> and that's why I identify myself like that. [participant's emphasis in italics]

Well it's like the world as a community – you have to be this way, you have to present yourself this way, in order to belong to the community. And just by the fact that I am marrying a white person, that's a huge transgression to the rules of the community, or the fact that I'm living in Calgary, so far away from my parents with no family, that's a rule of the community that I have transgressed. It's ok to get all this education, but it's got to put in its place, you know? If I were to enter into the community, I'd have to find a place for my education in the

background not in the foreground, but those are the rules of the community that people don't say but you know what they are, when you grow up.

In conclusion, women in their 30s and 40s described feeling more at ease and comfortable with their ethnic identity. While they continued to revisit and renegotiate aspects of their lives with respect to their ethnicity, they did not describe struggling with establishing a balance in their cultural values. Their biculturalism was defined more by their personal expectations and values, and represented appreciating how their ethnic identity intersected with various parts of their lives (both personal and professional) and informed who they were. They also reported that they felt they would always negotiate and revisit the issue of their ethnicity, cultural values, and the impact these dimensions had on their lives. Fundamentally, they could not separate their East Indian-ness from any part of themselves or their way of being and functioning in the world.

Summary

Several themes emerged over the course of participant's lives. One significant theme that resurfaced at each stage of their life was evaluating and negotiating their cultural values and the significance these values held in the context of various issues. Many women described junior high school as a period that was fraught with tensions and self-questioning about belonging, what it meant to be East Indian, and how others perceived and stereotyped their ethnic and racial identity. Growing up in two cultural milieus also presented different issues and considerations for these girls. Many of participants described struggling in junior high school, when feeling like you belonged or were part of a group was important. Being ethnically and racially different added an

additional burden and issue to negotiate. Their struggle was also intensified by the fact that they did not have any role models or mentors, who could help them to negotiate the challenges and dilemmas they were facing. Growing up in communities in which there were very few ethnic minorities left them at a loss and often required that they develop their own coping strategies. These strategies included trying to fit in with their peers, denying their ethnic heritage, feeling ashamed and embarrassed about being different, feeling weird or like an outcast, or simply withdrawing, not asserting themselves and simply living within the parameters of their family and ethnic community and without friends outside of this circle.

Their childhood and preadolescent experiences brought dramatic realizations and understanding of being culturally, racially, and ethnically different and raised the question of how to fit into Canadian society and their own ethnic communities. Conversely, high school was a period in which they gained more self-confidence in their ethnic identity. It was often in high school that their social network was extended to include other ethnic minority individuals and other East Indian children. These relationships offered a social support network that facilitated their ability to negotiate feeling, looking, and being culturally different.

A support network also existed in another form for the women who grew up with older and younger siblings in the home. In traditional East Indian families, living with the extended family is common. Women whose families consisted of both parents and extended family (i.e., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives), commented that living in this communal family structure facilitated their awareness and appreciation of their cultural, religious, and ethnic heritage. They lived their culture

within their families in a more profound and explicit fashion. For example, being raised or babysat by grandparents encouraged them to learn their language to communicate with these elders in the family. These elders also shared stories and answered questions about religion or family history, and this also allowed these women to feel more grounded within their heritage and identity – something that helped them to assert their ethnic difference in the outside world.

As adults, the issue of fitting into Canadian society or into their ethnic communities became less of a concern and preoccupation for these women. Determining how to blend and integrate the dual cultural influences into their lives more actively and consciously became a salient issue, particularly in the context of marriage and raising children. As older second-generation women talked about their lives, reflections on how their ethnic identity and cultural values intersected and informed their lives and decision making was more evident.

Another underlying theme throughout their lives was the issue of family and upbringing. This was expressed in terms of a connection to or disconnection from cultural values and to their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. The issue of families was also linked to religious affiliation. The differences between the Christian, Hindu, and Muslim women in the study were exemplified as more conservation or traditional family structure and dynamics, particularly with respect to Hindu and Muslim families. They described being raised in intact and typically more conservative families. Although there appeared to be more traditional adherence to cultural practices in the home, these could be understood partially in the context of adherence to religious tenets or teachings. For example, one woman who was Christian but raised in a Pakistani Muslim community

noted significant difference between the two East Indian communities. When she was a child, her family had been more connected to the Muslim community but as a teenager she began to socialize more with an East Indian Christian community. She described the Muslim East Indians as more conservative, as having hierarchical family structures and traditional family dynamics. Socializing within the Muslim community also followed specific rules and codes of conduct. Expectations included that women and men would not socialize together, that physical touching was prohibited even in greeting others, and that elders were to be addressed formally in all interactions. On the other hand, in the East Indian Christian community, similar cultural values existed (i.e., respect for elders) but were not expressed in the same formal and structured manner. Hindu women also described noticing differences between these three religious communities, and they described the Christian community as more westernized and also more accepted by mainstream society given that they share the same religious practices. Conversely, the religious practices of Hindu and Muslim's are significantly different from the dominant culture. Society's perception of these religions also supports the idea that Hindu and Muslims are dramatically different from the mainstream.

In conclusion, several common themes are woven like colored threads throughout the lives of these women as they negotiate and establish their own personal and blended identity between two cultural contexts.

CHAPTER 5: BICULTURAL INTEGRATION

The findings of this study were derived from an analysis of two individual interviews conducted with 16 participants. Analysis of participant's stories revealed 6 broad and overarching categories. These included (a) *How they are taught to be East Indian; (b) How they are expected to be Canadian; (c) How they retain their East Indian-ness; (d) How they fit-in and do not fit-in; (e) What happens when cultures clash, and (f) Creating a balance between cultural values.*

Underlying these categories is the concept of cultural values. For example, retaining one's cultural and ethnic traditions, the significance of cultural congruity, and the dilemmas and challenges of fitting in arose as a function of negotiating different cultural values. A second-generation immigrant situating him/herself within two cultural milieus must perform a juggling act to restructure and create a bicultural identity. Creating a balance and sense of cultural continuity presents several challenges and requires an individual to develop versatile and adaptable negotiation skills. The ultimate question participants faced was deciding how to be East Indian (according to their own personal definition) while simultaneously being Canadian, and living in Canadian society.

The significance of cultural values in the lives of East Indian women is particularly meaningful and important to consider given that they hold the primary responsibility for retaining, teaching, and instilling cultural values and congruence for future generations. Hence the choices they make and the challenges they face as second-generation immigrants regarding their bicultural identity becomes an important consideration not only for themselves but also for the ethnic identity of their later

generation children. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will present the salient categories and themes identified during data analysis that explicated the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women.

How they are Taught to be East Indian

This first category represents how participants learned and absorbed cultural messages from their families and community about what it means to be East Indian. The central theme underlying this category reflects the importance placed on distinguishing East Indian cultural values from those of mainstream Canadian society. As young girls, the women in this study learned about their East Indian cultural values and distinct ethnic identity in a variety of ways. These messages were transmitted both implicitly and explicitly by (a) parental role modelling in the home, (b) living in an extended family unit, and (c) an awareness of different norms between themselves and their peers, and (d) socializing exclusively within the East Indian community through religious and cultural activities. The transmission of cultural values through these means contributed to instilling a sense of community, identity, and connection to cultural traditions and practices.

Parental Modelling

The dynamics in the home often modelled and set the standard for appropriate gender roles, hierarchy within the family, and styles of interacting. Some of these messages were communicated explicitly (i.e., Indian girls do not stay out late or visit bars), but other cultural norms and "ways of being East Indian" were communicated simply through observation and modelling.

> Yeah, so growing up at home was very different for that reason. But it was also very different from other homes because of the natural hierarchy we had between males and females. And I was given…my dad was very traditional minded in that respect and I was expected…I was cooking and cleaning and cooking meals for the family probably by about 11 years old and always….my brother – always having to wait on my brother and my father and just sort of those kinds of things and not given the same room to explore and hang out and visit and socialize — things like that as my brother was given early on. But I didn't really ever mind that. Like most people had a really difficult time, I really enjoyed cooking, I really enjoyed the time with my mom and I took a lot of pride in domesticated activities. And I'm still like that now, and I never saw it as oppressive.

Extended Family

Family form and structure offered another example and lesson of what it meant to be East Indian. A collectivist orientation and the importance of family values were ideas ingrained from an early age, and consequently influenced how these women viewed and situated themselves over the course of their lives. Living with extended family throughout childhood offered an important connection to cultural values and solidified a strong East Indian ethnic identity for many women. This clearly was seen as an advantage that enriched their lives.

> I think for me, growing up in an East Indian family, I was probably one of the few people that grew up in an extended family in terms of in my house there was always somebody else living with us. It was just never me, my brother, my mom

> and my dad. Ever since I can remember, my dads brother lived with us for years and then my mom's parents came and my mom's brother came, my mom's sister came, my dads sister came, I have cousins that have come and I have lived with people from the age of....well since I was born, there's pictures of me with my dads brother – since I was born until I was 22 years old...23 years old. Actually, no, until I got married, until I was 24, my cousin was still living with us. I think in those 24 years there was not even a two year gap where nobody was living with us and that was when I was 19 and 20 and 21, there was nobody living with us. And when I turned....well when I was 21 my cousins emigrated from India and she lived with my parents for five years. She just moved out. So I've always had somebody living in our house. And I think that has influenced the East Indian culture on my brother and myself more than anything else because when your grandparents live with you, that's how we learned to speak the language.

Connection to Community

The social support and affiliation with one's religious and ethnic community further contributed to assisting these women's sense of personal and ethnic identity – something that distinguished them from their Canadian peers.

> Quite honestly, I feel like a lot of the relationships that I built when I was in the East Indian Orthodox church with other Malayalee youth of my age group, those relationships are still happening and they're still very strong. So that's where I feel like I get a lot of my support from.

> So we went to Garba Nights, and we went to Divali and we went to the temple and we went and we did all of those things. We went to my aunt's house for dinner, we went to my uncles house for dinner, we did those things on a regular basis as well as family spent a lot of time with us. I think growing up though, just in terms of trying to explain why things are the way they are was really hard because I didn't know. That's just the way it is. Mom and dad would just say "That's what we do".

Cultural Norms for Girls

The limit on personal freedom for East Indian girls in comparison to their male siblings was another ideal that set these girls apart from their Canadian peers and highlighted the distinct gendered expectations and cultural values for East Indian girls.

> The following year when my brother graduated, well, my brother didn't get home until 6:00 in the morning and no one said two words about it! But, I was by that time – I was like whatever. I was just used to it. There was no point in arguing it. My year was over, I'd already done it. So I think when I turned 18 and was going.....going into grade seven and turning 18 were probably the two hardest...well not even the hardest, the two years that there was a lot of changes. Going into grade seven just because you're in a new culture in junior high and had to do a lot of explaining and when you turn 18, you want to hit the bars, you want to go out with your friends, you want to...you want to experience those

> things that 18-year-olds experience in the Canadian culture…In an East Indian culture whether you're 18 or 12, it doesn't seem to matter. You don't experience those things, you just don't do those things. So that was a little tough. But we managed – compromised, lots of compromising. I think with my parents as long as to them, school work was a priority and as long as school work was getting done and I was home when they wanted me to be home – like if someone was coming over for dinner, you're not going out. So and so is coming over for dinner and you need to stay. Ok, fine. So the next Saturday, I'm going to go. And that was ok because it was kind of meeting in the middle. I wasn't out every Saturday night. When I did go out, I did come home at my curfew every single time. At the age of 21 I had a curfew of midnight. I was always home at midnight. My parents knew that I would be home at midnight. And so I think that trust was a big part of it too. I never came home at 2:00 drunk and I never even came home at midnight drunk – ever. And so my parents knew that so for them to say ok, go out, be home by midnight, was ok.

Although there were slight differences in the degree of personal freedom each girl experienced, each participant recounted clearly understanding the cultural expectations rules. They usually remarked on the rules in a nonchalant manner and suggested they were common for all East Indian girls and were not just specific to their families. These cultural rules dictated that East Indian girls do not go out at night or stay out late, that they dress modestly, that they have limited contact with boys and that their primary responsibility is to focus their attention on doing well in school. These values were reinforced both within their families and within the larger East Indian community and

contributed to creating an environment that both sheltered and protected these girls from the "assumed" negative influences of North American culture.

> But I definitely think that's played a part in me growing up. There is my peer group and who I was around and it helped me....I guess yeah, that's the challenges and difficulties I would say I went through. I didn't have so many challenges or difficulties in the household. My parents were always pretty good. Like yeah, something's were....which are normal which every East Indian girl would go through, like I want to stay out until past 11 or something, and even now still, I'm 21 and I mean I still have a curfew and I have....like my other friends, they all understand. I mean it happens. That's how things work, of course you're going to have a curfew. Guys can't call me past 10:00 or my parents are like why are they calling so late? Like if it was a girl, yeah, it's ok. But there's certain rules that I have to follow. And even one time when I was at work and I'd just got this job and one of my friends, he worked there and so he called me – he called me at 11 and I could tell my parents were not very happy and this was like three years ago! And it was just because it was a white guy calling me at 11:00 pm; it was like oh, what is this? They weren't too happy. But if it were to happen to somebody else, it wouldn't be such a big deal. I don't know what I'm trying to say...I guess it's just....they are definitely....there are definite differences with who I....I guess who I am and who maybe...maybe who white people are.

> And religion was a really big part of our family because I mean when you consistently have people coming over from India, they're not....and you're consistently showing them the Canadian culture, you're also learning about the East Indian culture at the same time because you always hear "Well in India that's not how they do things. Well in India girls don't go out at night, well in India girls...." So you consistently hear that. And my parents really followed the East Indian girl's role. I wasn't allowed to be out late at night, I wasn't allowed to have phone calls late at night, 9:00 – anything after 9:00 my dad would get mad at me "Who needs to call you after 9:00?" And so my friends were really, really good about understanding it because I had friends for years and so they just kind of knew that that's what things were like in my house and it wasn't a bad thing, it was just a different thing. Family gatherings were very important – if somebody was coming over for supper on a Saturday night, you didn't go out, you stayed home. And I wouldn't say my parents were strict, I think my parents just really enforced the East Indian culture on us.

The transmission of cultural norms also carried the inherent message that the East Indian culture included expectations for girls, unique and distinct from Canadian culture through comments that "East Indian girls don't do this". Hence, being East Indian was distinguished from being Canadian and was highlighted by emphasizing difference. Although tensions arose as girls attempted to negotiate some flexibility in their curfews and social interactions, they fundamentally adhered to the rules presented by their families. Their adherence to familial and cultural rules demonstrated the influence and

power these forces had in their lives. Their connection and commitment to family continued to play a significant role throughout these women's lives.

Mothers as Role Models

Many participants described their parents as being overall positive influences, and role models of hard work and success. Although these girls developed social networks and friends, maintaining strong family ties remained an important factor throughout their lives. They frequently cited their mothers as significant role models that exemplified the strengths of East Indian womanhood. Their mothers exemplified the value and commitment to family, and caring for others in the community. They were also role models of resilience, courage, and strength in the way they coped with immigration, supporting their spouses and investing in the institution of marriage. Mothers also modeled examples of dignity and pride in the ways they asserted their ethnic identity and cultural traditions.

> Yeah, and I don't get why you look the way you do. So yeah, I mean growing up in [province], trying to....I mean my mom was a really strong role model which was probably good because we didn't have anybody else. She did whatever she wanted. If she wanted to wear sari out, she'd wear it out. She didn't question it, nothing. If she wanted to mix make up, she was going to mix it until she got it right. So if you came over when we were eating curry, well then try it. So that kind of thing. So in that way, she was a very strong role model for us. And probably it was good thing that we didn't really have anybody else that we could kind of look to in the city.

> Yeah, but I mean that is the part of the culture I like, the fact that our parents do care so much for us. You know, like they do want our lives to be better than theirs. They came here for that reason alone, you know, well for themselves also, but that <pause> you know, so their children would have this. And, I mean that's what I'm proud of. Like I'm so proud of my Mom for coming here and doing this and me having the life I have and I think that is what I take away from culture and give my kids.

In addition to promoting pride in their East Indian identity, mothers also encouraged their daughter's integration into Canadian society. Their concern in assuring that their daughters fit in, learned to speak English well, and dressed according to North American styles also conveyed the importance immigrant families placed on building a niche and identity for their children as Canadians.

> My mom was just such a strong role model for us as far as East Indian women go. And I feel really happy about that because I know a lot of my peers have not had the same role models. And I know those that are close to my mom really respect her as being a strong woman role model as well. So I mean, my life has been a little bit different just because of her hasn't been a real typical traditional family. But as far as being second-generation, those things have all made it easy. My parents have worked so hard to make us feel comfortable where we are. It was important for them for us to …like they put us in play school because they wanted us to be social with people who aren't Malayalee, who are a little bit different than us. And my mom always spoke English to us when we were younger

> because she didn't want us to be made fun of when we went to school. She wanted us to know English and speak English and always speak English. That kind of thing; so she almost tried extra hard with us because I know a lot of the younger kids who are second-generation Malayalee kids who are going to school now, go to school with an accent because they speak nothing but Malayalum with their parents until they go to school. So they are made fun of a little bit because they've got an accent.

How East Indian girls are taught and expected to be East Indian played a significant role during their childhood and adolescence. However the impact of their upbringing and early cultural messages continued to influence who they were and how they chose to negotiate their ethnic identity throughout their lives. It is important to note that although the majority of girls described learning "how to be East Indian" through their families, there were a few participants that did not grow up with a strong anchoring in an East Indian community or through cultural activities. These women typically had grown up in communities or environments in which they were the only visible ethnic minority family. Consequently, the main social and cultural influences in their lives had been through Canadian society. They described taking on the personal responsibility as adults to learn about their ethnic identity, and culture through reading about East Indian history, watching Hindi movies, learning to cook East Indian food, or following East Indian pop culture through music. So although they did not grow up with a strong identification with their cultural heritage and traditions, as adults it became important for them to establish and maintain a link with their East Indian identity and heritage.

How they are Expected to be Canadian

This second category describes the challenges participants faced in their personal, academic, and professional lives. Expectations about how to be Canadian mainly occurred in the context of their social relationships with peers. These expectations were not always articulated explicitly (i.e., "We expect you to act in the following way"), they were expressed more covertly in terms of questions from their peer group about issues such as early curfews, not being allowed to date, why they act in a reserved manner, or why they continued to live at home as adults. These questions and the surprised reactions from Canadian peers communicated the idea that the way they lived was seen as unusual because it did not fit with North American norms and expectations.

Social Activities

As adolescents and young women, East Indian values clashed with the invitations to visit bars and dance clubs, staying out late at night, going to parties, and dating. Although these women had some personal freedom to participate in these activities, the limits placed by their families curbed their ability to participate fully with their peers.

> And you do kind of think of yourself as being different that is when I think you first realize it. In elementary you don't really cause everybody's friends, everybody's....nobody really cares about anything....<laughing>. I think that is when I realized- difference in the sense like boys and curfews and things like that. A lot of my girl friends couldn't understand why I wasn't able to go out and stay out past 10:30 at that time – and 10:30 was still really good, if I was to compare to my East Indian friends like when I would go to dance class.

> I think the other thing for me is I have a brother who's only a year younger than me, so boys are treated very differently than girls are and I had a really hard time with how that went because my brother was allowed to go out and he was allowed to do things and didn't have to do the same....didn't have the same expectations as I did because he was a boy. So that was really hard and my parents could never really explain that except for saying that he's a boy, it's different. It's different for him. And I didn't understand how because in the Canadian culture it's not. In the Canadian culture, in most family's boy or girl when they turn 16, you're allowed to date. When you turn 18 you don't have a curfew anymore or your curfew is extended to whatever time, it doesn't matter if you're male or female. And in the East Indian culture, it's not like that.

Family Structure

Another expectation or norm within Canadian society is the assumption of living within the context of a nuclear family. Often East Indian families living in Canada continue to live within an extended family unit including grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The idea that these girls lived in a different family context was surprising to many of their peers and appeared to be something their Canadian friends did not understand.

> So it was different for people because I was different. All of a sudden there was this different culture, different person coming in with these different ideas of...people were surprised "You live with your aunt and uncle? Where does everyone sleep?" Like they just didn't understand that because in their families,

extended family stayed somewhere else, they never stayed with you – especially an aunt and uncle right. And grandparents, what do you mean you live with your grandparents? They just didn't understand that. Well what was I going to do....what were my parents going to do with them? Same with my aunt and uncle. And even when I was in high school, my cousin lived with us and people would still say "What do you mean your cousin is living with you? Why can't your cousin get her own place?" Well because in the East Indian culture you don't let a girl go and get her own place when she comes to a new country when her family is right in that same city. You just don't do that. And to me that makes sense, to me I understand the safety behind it, I understand the support and the logic and that family feeling behind it. But the Canadian culture doesn't, they just think oh, she should be independent, she's left her parents and she should move into an apartment and that's kind of where they come from. So they don't understand why she couldn't go and get her own apartment. Then there was that two year gap or whatever and my cousin came to live with us and he brought his family – his wife and his two kids and oh my God "What do you mean you have four extra people living in your house? Two little kids? How can you study..." and that was just part of my family. It wasn't a big deal when my dad said ok, so and so is coming, they've just got their Visa and they're arriving on this date so make sure that the room is ready and bla bla bla. Yeah and understand that they'll be a little bit different and he's got two kids and you have to....ok. It was never taken as what do you mean they're coming to live with us? We have no room! Ok. It was just kind of another sure, great, another addition to our family. We

have more people in Calgary now that are families that are living near us and that's great for us. And people just didn't understand that. Why can't they just get their own place?

Living at Home as Adults

The expectation within North American culture is that adult children leave home and become both financially and emotionally independent from their families. Continuing to live at home after the age of 21 was seen as unusual and again elicited reactions of surprise and disbelief from Canadian peers. The norm within the East Indian culture dictates that all children continue to live at home until they are married. Even after marriage, it is acceptable and desirable to live with one's in-laws, and within more traditional families, a daughter-in-law is expected to live with the husband's family.

Yeah. The White friends. They didn't understand because in their culture you....you move out. You move out when you're 21 or 22 and live in your own apartment. I lived at home until I was 24 and....I'd still be living at home I'm sure. Yeah, and you don't see anything wrong with that and I think if I...I don't see anything wrong with that either, but they do. They...they say you're 24 years old and you're not in your own apartment? Ok, you try to tell that to my dad! I want to move out dad...that wouldn't go over very well. <laughing> You didn't even think about that because that is not something that you did. I mean I remember when a girlfriend of mine moved out, she moved to Winnipeg from Calgary to be on her own and it was a huge thing in the community and a huge thing in her family and she'd call everyday and so I'd talk to my friends and I'd

> say she's going through a really hard time, moving into her own apartment and they just couldn't understand what the big deal was – why the hard time, why are her parents giving her...and part of the culture, we just don't move out until you get married. So that was a big thing. I find myself having to explain a lot of cultural things and religious things to people.
>
> But when it came time to marry, they went back home or found somebody from back home. And I couldn't do that and I told my dad that, I said if you don't want me to marry him, I won't, but I can't promise you when I will and stuff like that. So anyway, we got married and we ended up living with my parents for about four years and obviously in that time the relationship really grew and S (husband) became very entrenched in our community. And also somewhere in between there, my family stopped socializing so much with Muslims and started socializing more with Christians because the Asian Christian church kind of came in to be when I was 13 or 14.

Hence, the of value of autonomy and independence encouraged by North American society runs contrary to the expectations and values promoted within East Indian cultural framework. Negotiating these opposing value systems can present a cultural dilemma for some East Indian women based on their personal choices, their family's expectations and North American cultural expectations.

How they Retain Their East Indian-ness

A third category that emerged from the data was *How these women retain their East Indian-ness.* Retaining their East Indian-ness was described as a lifelong process that required these women to engage in an ongoing process of reflexivity. Examining and assessing their East Indian cultural values and making choices about what elements of their ethnic identity they wanted to retain in their adult lives was a central component of this process.

Another significant element of this personal process is linked to their self-identification or self-labelling as East Indian. Participants mainly self identified as East Indian; however, they simultaneously situated their nationality as Canadian, indicating Canada was their home and a country in which they felt most comfortable. Their Canadian identity reflected some of their personal choices (i.e., meaning not being traditionally East Indian). For example, this included not getting married until their late 20s or not being strongly entrenched in the East Indian social community and also living a more Canadian life style (atypical from their families). However, it is important to note that being East Indian and Canadian were not oppositional identities, but rather these identities worked together as a unified whole. It was the perception of these identities, the meaning attributed by others and the expectations of others that created tensions for these women.

Self-Identification

The majority of women in the study used the label of East Indian to signify their ethnic identity and did not use a hyphenated identity or the labels predominant in the current literature (i.e., South Asian Indian or Asian Indian). Although they identified

themselves as East Indian they also indicated that an element of their identity was firmly grounded in being Canadian. As a nationality, being Canadian signified that Canada was their home and they did not aspire to return to India. Being Canadian did not detract from simultaneously being East Indian, these two identities existed in unison for these women. However, several did comment on the fact that being East Indian was only one part of their identity, but did not define the sum of who they were.

> I only think of myself as born in South Africa and that is all. I don't think of myself as having an African identity or as South African ever....I never have. I have always seen myself as an East Indian person and I just happened to be born in South Africa <laughing>. Yeah...that's interesting. I just had this conversation with another woman recently. We didn't know one another and were meeting for the first time and so she said "how will I know who you are?" and well the first thing I said was "I am East Indian".....and so I definitely think of myself in that way. I mean I am Canadian, I definitely consider myself as being Canadian because I was born in Canada, raised in Canada. I'm definitely Canadian. It doesn't mean that I'm not East Indian, it doesn't mean that I'm not Hindu, it doesn't mean that I don't have a cultural background of something else other than the Canadian culture. And I think when you live in a country that's very different from the country your parents were raised in, you have to...and I strong believe that you have to obtain some of those cultural values and some of those cultural expectations of people.

> My few experiences, there haven't been many. I can also take it as learning, like there's certain people who are ignorant and I know....when I look at myself and I do talk to people and they ask who I am, I will say I'm East Indian. I'm not ashamed to say I'm East Indian. But at the same time, I think....I also don't want to be defined as being East Indian. I am M and part of me is East Indian, and part of me is also....this part I'm educated or I work here or whatever, it's part of me, it's not who I am. It's just a part of who I am, but it doesn't define me completely. I don't know if that makes sense?

Traditions/History

Participants often described themselves as part of a collective in terms of holding status as a part of a community and sharing a collective history of their people. They simultaneously identified themselves as being an individual who was not solely defined by their ethnicity and ethnic identity. Similar to their process of self-labelling there existed a congruence in defining themselves as individuals and as part of a larger East Indian history and tradition.

> Hhmmm, I don't know that it's so much about things I do, it feels like there is a part of me that carries the history of my people inside me, and that is the East Indian-ness. Like, there are the behavioural things, like cooking East Indian food. Like someone who is not East Indian can cook East Indian food, but that doesn't make then East Indian or give them East Indian-ness. I think it's in choosing, one is my spirituality and....<pause> and in something about feeling like I carry the history of my people. And I don't know how to explain that to somebody. <Pause, thinking>. I think for other people it might not be how their East Indian-

ness is, but I think for me it's....like I think of India and the history of India and the British invasion of India and East Indian people being subservient and.... them having to find themselves, while being dominated by such a strong culture, that continues to have its presence in India long after the British have left. So it's the people....like it's the history of the people who have this strong and rich cultural heritage but that have to struggle with maintaining and being in touch with it and expressing it in its true way. And for me it's like that – it's something in that, that I feel like I carry.

But things I love about being East Indian are that there's a richness to the heritage and culture that we have that when we celebrate something, it is...there is a lot of history behind it. Like when we celebrate <inaudible>, it's in a tradition that has existed for years and years and years. And when you go to a wedding ceremony, there's so much symbolism and so much....there's so much drama but there's also years of people walking before us... there is a sense of "wow, I am involved in something that has been done for generations". And I know there is something <inaudible> from a defined culture and they yearn for that. I appreciate having something to celebrate and understanding what that and knowing that our forefathers built that for us.

The concept of retaining one's East Indian-ness and maintaining one's Canadian-ness emerged as a function of their childhood experiences and continued to be a significant issue in the context of their adult lives. As children this issue expressed itself as trying to fit in and be like their peers, but in late adolescence and early adulthood, it

transformed into a more conscious critical analysis of self, a deconstruction and reconstruction of their ethnic identity as an integrated whole. This issue emphasized a personal exploration and decision-making process to determine which cultural values they wanted to incorporate into their lives, whether in the context of marriage, raising a family, social relationships, and continued connection or disconnection from their ethnic community. It expressed itself as periods of intense self-questioning and personal reflection. Many women at this time moved between a sense of connection with and disconnection from their ethnic communities and mainstream society as they began to create and construct a separate and personally defined ethnic identity – one that was independent of the parameters defined by their families or community.

> I think in many ways it is the same that it has been since May 1995. Except I think I am being more conscious now than in 1995. Because I have like…because I've stepped outside of the box means now I can choose…I can choose. And so again as I'm getting married to T, we're building our lives together and choosing and deciding where we're going to invest our energies. There's truly choice in there, that I don't know I would have felt had I stayed in the box, about how to create a life with him and what would be involved So that's where I see myself…I see that there is choice. And in that process I carry along my East Indian-ness and…I'm sure that at some points in my life, like…and I'm sure a big one is going to be…like this wedding has been a big one, about what kind of ceremony to have. And my real strong, like me, to have an East Indian ceremony and that was big for me. I have to have an East Indian ceremony,

> I have to be a traditional bride, I have to dress that way, I have to live that out. And then all of the problems with my family and finally us coming to the decision that…we'll have a civil ceremony in order to provide them the opportunity to give an East Indian ceremony, if and when they want to do that. That was big!! That's a big deal! I mean letting go of that. It was a big deal. Like I don't know if anybody in my life has realized what a big deal…

> My experience has also been that my parents didn't have a lot of advice in terms of how to survive in this culture because they didn't know how to….and I think that is common. <Inaudible> figuring out what it means to be Canadian and what it means to be East Indian and for me…because my parents weren't very much East Indian themselves, what I wanted to promote in my own character that was East Indian even if my parents didn't have it, to find it myself. So if I wanted to learn about East Indian food to find out – but not from my parents. And I wanted to learn about East Indian movies or watch them – but not necessarily at my home.

Marriage and Children

As adults determining "How to Retain their East Indian-ness" became a significant consideration in the context of marriage and children. These issues required them to consider (a) marrying an East Indian or non-East Indian man, (b) raising a family, (c) negotiating the potential bi-racial status of future children, and (d) the potential loss of cultural identity (dilution of cultural and racial identity).

> but now.....and I remember in junior high wanting to fit in, in terms of the role models that we had – like the Madonna hair and the Cindy Lauper and the...you know? And Blair on Facts of Life – all those looks were not East Indian but they were images that we had. But now, now I want to fit in....I don't want to lose my culture and I don't have enough of it to pass it on to my own kids in myself. I feel like I need some help with that. Getting married surrounds that a lot because if I marry someone who's not East Indian, then I don't feel like I have enough East Indian in me to pass it onto my kids. So I don't want to lose my culture, so there are some pressures that I put on myself to be aware of that choice I make and how it impacts my kids in the future. So I want to fit in that way. I want to fit into my culture where I don't lose my culture, I want to be a part of it.

Dilution

A fear of cultural "dilution" was described by a few participants, as one of the concerns of raising biracial children. The physical appearance of one's children and questioning if they would look East Indian (complexion and colouring) was an interesting concern. Within the context of their own lives, "being too dark" was considered a liability, yet when considering marriage to a non-East Indian man and the possible biracial status of their children (or grandchildren), the concern was expressed as a desire for them to "look East Indian" and not lose an identifiable aspect of their ethnicity.

> That kind of conversion is a pretty big one. So I get the impression that he [father] may not have been very connected with his own religious background [referring to her father who married a British woman and converted from Hinduism to

> Catholicism]. I think it's unfortunate because, well maybe not unfortunate, maybe fortunate to a degree, I just think, my kids certainly will not have a lot of the difficulties that I think I had. I mean even if you talk about dilution in terms of physical appearance and I remember the last time we talked we were laughing and I thought afterwards of the trauma if someone was to give me a little blonde baby. I would be like <pause> like asking if they made a mistake, you know what I mean like. I would go, 'Who is this?' You know I would need to like you know I would need to feel it looked like me, you know and not someone who's blonde. L (finance) says, but you know "Well we could get that" and I'm like, "No, we cannot". And I think oh my god, I could have a kid and it could look completely White....it would feel foreign.

> I told them [sons] I wanted them to marry brown girls <laughing> to which my youngest son said mom, you might hurt dad's feelings. But I said I don't think so! I don't care! You've got to get that back in your blood! <laughing> I want little brown grandchildren! We're so diluted...they're only...we calculated now that we know what B (husband) is, which is Russian and Irish, they're only 6.25% East Indian. Before that they didn't even know what they were! <laughing>.

Their visible ethnic and racial status was an issue that was directly connected to the retention of their ethnic identity and that of future generations of children.

Integrating East Indian Values in Marriage

The ways in which these women incorporated their East Indian-ness into their lives particularly in the context of marriage was to model and teach these values to their husbands and in-laws, thereby integrating them into their new lives. Although each couple discussed and negotiated how they would integrate elements from both their cultural and ethnic backgrounds into their lives and into the lives of their future children, East Indian cultural values were not given secondary status. In this way, participants blended and modified their East Indian identity but found a comfortable middle ground in which they did not feel compromised. In most cases, East Indian cultural values were emphasized, and one participant offered the following example of how she has encouraged her husband to become more connected and involved with both his immediate and extended family and how his family has embraced her religious and cultural practices.

> I'll give you an example. When my husband and I first got married, we moved to Winnipeg and my uncle from Chicago and California and South Carolina and New York would call once every two or three weeks to see how I was doing and how things were going and what was new and this and that and he just couldn't believe it – what do you mean your uncle called? What does your uncle need to call for? Because he only sees his uncles and aunts at Christmas. And he just couldn't believe it and I just thought....and I would think why hasn't your uncle called? Why haven't we heard from your mom? It's been two weeks! Well my mom will call if she needs something. And my mom calls like every second day just to say hello! <laughing> So that's kind of different. And I've taken my

> family values and really pushed them on my husband's family because now we talk to his parents once a week. We are in constant contact with his aunts and uncles via email, it doesn't matter. We're still in contact with them. He never was before except for Christmas when he saw them. The same were cousins and stuff, and I think that....I mean we all say....they all say "Before you, we never heard from J (husband)" or "Before you we only saw him at Christmas time. Before you...." And that made me really sad that as a family you only see each other at Christmas time and my family, lord if a month goes by and my aunt doesn't hear from me in Calgary and she'll call me to say "How come I haven't heard from you?" She's insulted that I haven't called her in a month.

Participants created a sense of personal congruence in their bicultural identity by internally defining personal and cultural values; rather than defining them through the external expectations dictated by either their family or ethnic community. Negotiating these values in the context of their relationships and with their partners was cited as the primary way in which cultural values and ideals would be lived and transmitted. For many women, this process was embraced and welcomed by all family members, but for others the process was fraught with tensions and conflict both within themselves and within their families.

> She said there's part of you, that when you go and you are in it [your family], you question yourself all over again and you feel like "Oh my God, what I am leaving here, what have I done?". And I know what she's talking about because that's exactly what happens to me – not so much when I visit my family, because of all

the crap with my family. But, there are certain things in the community, like when I go to weddings and everybody's there… and part of me goes "Oh my God, what have I done? What have I turned my back on?" And then there's another part of me that says "But, well that's not who you are anyway". Like you want to be *in it,* then you have to cut out all these other parts of yourself [participants emphasis in italics].

I think it is interesting because it shows you what their definition of being an East Indian person is right? As long as you continue to live the way we tell you to live, then you are an East Indian person, and when you step out of it, you are not an East Indian person. So I have had to struggle with that…"Am I an East Indian person?" And I said I feel like there is a part….like that's how come I know the answer to that question because I spent a lot of time with that question, and I feel like yeah, there is this thing inside of me that is an East Indian person. Now I get to consciously choose how to be an East Indian person, how to keep that East Indian-ness in me and alive and how to pass it along to my children, because I don't want it to be lost, but I don't know how I am going to do any of that.

Personal Definition of being East Indian

Negotiating how to live one's ethnic identity was a challenging task at times and a process that required an intense questioning of how to define one-self as East Indian and create a definition and experience that was congruent with one's life style, worldview and personal belief system.

Several participants described ultimately acquiring a stronger sense of self-confidence in their ethnic identity as a function of age and life experience. Although this can be framed within the context of developmental maturity, there appears to be another dimension to their emerging self-acceptance. Creating a blended identity and developing a comfort zone within not only one but multiple cultural milieus requires a complex analysis and negotiation of one's belief system and positioning within those multiple contexts. In the case of these women this required them to decide not only how they wanted to live their East Indian-ness but also what it meant to integrate Canadian values into their life style. Being East Indian not only represented their individual and ethnic identity but also carried with it a sense of belonging to a larger community and collective history. Disconnecting or distancing themselves from these identities and institutions almost seemed impossible given the deeply rooted meaning they held in originally defining these women's ethnic identity. Nonetheless, these women often ventured consciously into the process of personal reflection to wrestle with these cultural issues in order to create a sense of congruence within themselves and their lives.

Some women developed a sense of congruence by confronting and struggling with the issues of their ethnic identity and their visible minority status. This personal process occurred over many years and helped them arrive at a point of accepting that they would always live on the margins and between two cultural worlds. The issue of having and exercising conscious choice in how to live, picking and choosing elements from each value system meant that they adopted a more accepting stance. They consciously decided "This is who I am, asserting oneself as a person with a background of multiple ethnic and cultural influences". They also surrounded themselves with friends, peers, and mentors

who were accepting, supportive and respectful of their diversity. Other participants developed a sense of personal congruence after marriage and remarked that this occurred as a function of the personal authority and status marriage afforded them.

> So I think I've developed that ability to see through and just adapt somewhat. Now, it hasn't always felt great, it's like I can remember times in my 20s feeling like "Where do I belong? When I don't feel like I belong anywhere". I don't feel necessarily wanted in the East Indian community and lots of stuff on the Canadian side that I didn't like. So it doesn't fit and in my 30s, I'm much better at saying that's ok if it doesn't fit and it's ok if I move a little bit....and I don't feel like I'm giving up anything by sort of being fluid in that identity – so to speak. It is almost funny to me sometimes, like, it can work to the point where I can educate someone, and when I can educate someone then I feel a lot better and then I feel even more solid in who I am. I feel like "you obviously do not get how people immigrate". But yeah, I think for a number of years I didn't feel like I belonged anywhere. And now I think I'm at the point where if I want to belong then I am going to create that for myself and work at it myself, because there's no one group that that is going to say "yes come in", kind of thing.

> Right. I think some of it is having a bit more understanding of the East Indian population and saying "Yeah, there are people I wouldn't want to be a part of". I wouldn't want to have the arranged marriages, I wouldn't want to have some of the faith indoctrinated into my life. I'm happy to have been raised with the

> independence and those types of things. So I think what's happened is I've sort of become more aware of the cultures themselves and decided "Yeah, I may end up living between these two cultures my entire life and that's ok". Because I don't endorse everything in this culture and I don't endorse everything with this other culture. So if I get to pick and choose which ones I want, then I get to form what my identity is and no one can kind of call bogus on it because I don't really fit there and I don't really fit there. So I think just having a bit more understanding of some of the traditions and some of the values of either culture. I mean, East Indian culture there is a strong....it kind of assumes a strong direction of.... I should be at university and it is assumed that you are going to university and what is the white collar profession you are going to do...you should know how to cook.

As a result of sitting in the margins between two cultural worlds, several women commented that this allowed them to merge a combination of North American and East Indian values to suit their lives. This allowed them to create a blended ethnic identity that became a useful strategy for negotiating a sense of personal balance.

How they Fit in and do not Fit in

Fitting in and not fitting in was a theme that ran through participants' life stories growing up as a visible ethnic minority in Canada. It encompassed their visible racial status, different cultural and religious practices and family norms. Described in the previous chapter, growing up as a visible minority person required these women to confront the issue of racial stereotypes, and ethnocentric assumptions, and to reconcile how these attitudes situated and positioned them in society. This category describes how

participants simultaneously "fit-in and did not fit-in" in both Canadian society and their own ethnic community. The first realization of not fitting in arose through the recognition of their racial difference and was a significant aspect of their childhood experience.

Awareness of Race

Awareness of physical differences emerged sharply in mid childhood with regard to racial features. Because many of these women grew up in socially isolated communities, being a visible ethnic minority distinctively set them apart from their peers. Concurrently, their peers also lacked exposure to, and awareness of cultural, ethnic and racial minorities thereby making these girls targets of racial slurs, teasing and harassment. Being targets of these negative comments, created a sense of isolation and alienation for many women.

> Because quite frankly I don't fit in with the German's because I'm not white. Because [town] is a very German community and you just....even to be white....I guess I saw it was good to be white because I always got teased because I wasn't. So I guess I associated that with it for so long that I can't really....like to me, I wouldn't go to the German Cultural Club and go hang out. I think because visibly I'm East Indian looking I think? Whereas I feel very comfortable going where ever the East Indian's hang out here. You know what I mean? Not totally comfortable because I really don't know all the stuff about the culture, but just in terms of seeing people and...I don't know.

> And we had a lot of things vandalized growing up and again, we were the only East Indian community... family in our....we lived in a town house complex sort of a co-op and we were the only ones there so there were a couple of kids there that really....they would come by our house at dinner time and if my mom had been frying something they would make nasty remarks. I had my lunch kit sort of stolen and we had some house stuff vandalized. There was definite discrimination – now looking back that I saw. But I didn't really clue into why – that it was an ethnic thing at the time

Dilemmas of Race (Skin Colour)

While race was a defining element of their childhood, the issue of skin colour and complexion was an issue embedded within this larger context. It also defined how well they "fit-in or did not fit-in" in mainstream society. Many woman described how their early childhood experiences around this issue left them feeling embarrassed about being darker complexioned and compounded their feelings of isolation, shyness, and of being an outcast.

> Growing up in my family....I grew up in a small town in Alberta , so there weren't a lot of....it wasn't very multicultural, there wasn't a lot of other....there were some other East Indian families but not a lot at the time I was growing up, but I definitely felt....I definitely felt that I was a minority and a visible minority and a certain amount of....I don't know if I would say embarrassment about it, that might be too strong. But it's not really too strong, I think as a child I didn't

want to be different. I remember always thinking that the little blonde haired girls in my class were so lucky, they had such beautiful hair and I wanted that.

The dilemma that arises for these women can be characterized as simultaneously possessing an identity as an insider and outsider. As insiders they identify themselves as being like dominant population, because they see themselves as Canadian. However, others do not perceive them in the same way. Their visibility instantly situates them as outsiders, and does not allow their self-perception to be the dominant and defining element in how they are situated within the mainstream society.

So I think that makes it hard because you don't, what you end up identifying with is not being East Indian. You kind of identify with the majority, which at that time would have been Whites and there was a small time where I did, I wondered all the time what it was like to be white. Where people wouldn't look at you and people wouldn't say that...because your hair was long you're a witch, or people would stop saying "why are your lips so dark?" Like different things like that and you're like why are they asking these questions? So you don't really....and growing up in [province], no , I think that was part of probably one of my issues. Everyone wonders why I'm so quiet for the longest time or what happened, but when I think when you're faced with non-acceptance, these people questioning who you are or why you look a certain why, why would you be a confident individual? Why would you sort of step up to the plate and take a hit? It's not

always asked out of curiosity, it's asked out of well I don't understand why you look like that and why are you so different.

Several women who were lighter complexioned described being aware that their fair complexion was more acceptable within mainstream society. One participant described feeling secretly relieved that she was lighter skinned and did not want to openly associate with other ethnic kids because it made her identifiable as a visible ethnic minority. These statements exemplify how insidious and ingrained the issue of skin colour can be. For example, one participant shared the following comment: "As I got older, I have to say....you have a certain amount of relief, if not pride in the fact that I was lighter skinned than my other East Indian friends more than my other Asian friends."

The issue of lighter or darker complexioned also had implications for how they were perceived within their ethnic communities and particularly in the context of marriage. One participant described how marriage ads often emphasized if a woman was fair complexioned, sometimes ads also explicitly stated "seeking fair complexioned, educated girl to marry".

The issue of fitting in was not a clear-cut phenomenon. It was linked in a variety of ways to their racial and ethnic status in mainstream society, and also had implications for other aspects of their lives and identity. For example, the value placed on having a lighter complexion was connected to the issue of race, but it also infiltrated these women's self-perception, sense of self-worth and marriageability. Confronting these issues contributed another dimension to their ongoing analysis of their place as East Indian women within their communities.

Becoming aware of their racial and cultural difference and questioning how they fit-in and did not fit-in was also coupled with tensions based on their unique positioning between two cultural systems. Strict cultural norms for some women limited their ability to integrate and develop a fluid bicultural identity. The dilemma of this situation dictated that fitting-in well within their ethnic community often resulted in their marginalization in mainstream Canadian society or vice versa. This was a common experience for women who were raised in more conservative and traditional families, and social or religious communities.

> I remember in junior high in grade seven, a bunch of my friends were going to try out for the basketball team and they really wanted me to come and I really wanted to try out for the basketball team, just because everybody was doing it and I thought it would be kind of cool. But I knew I had to be home after school and I knew that even if I phoned and asked permission, there's no way I would get it because it was outside of school and all I was supposed to do was come home and study or whatever. So anyway, I chose not to phone home and I stayed and I tried out for the basketball team, and I remember at one point looking up and I saw my mom – and my mom was a very worrisome mom and so she was panicking when I didn't come home – understandably so…Anyway, sure enough, low and behold, I'm the only grade seven they chose to be on the team! And here comes my next problem – trying to convince my dad to let me join the basketball team which all of a sudden was hugely important to me – just to be socially accepted and it was something new for me and just to have that comradery and it was just really neat.

> So anyway, I think I cried for like three days and begged him to let me join the basketball team. His number one concern for me was that if I joined the team, my marks would suffer – schooling would suffer. So I tried to assure him that that wouldn't happen and he said ok, we'll give it a shot. So I was so excited, I got to be on the basketball team. My next thing was there was no way I could wear shorts. I was the only grade seven in gym class that didn't wear shorts. I wore sweats. I had to tell the teacher I couldn't do it. But anyway, dad never would have known if I had bought the gym shorts and worn them, but it just never occurred to me! And even on my basketball team, it never occurred to me to wear shorts. My dad told me I wasn't allowed to, I'd grown up that way and I just didn't…it was hard feeling….I felt out of place. I felt awkward but I didn't think there was any other way. I thought I just had to live with those feelings.

This example offers some insight into the challenge of juggling and negotiating two contradictory and oppositional cultural values. In attempting to expand her social activities this woman encountered difficulties because of the competing cultural prerequisite that she focus her attention on her academic work. Her strategy in dealing with this situation involved negotiating each cultural dilemma as it occurred; using a reactionary strategy versus a proactive strategy. For example, only after trying out and getting selected for the basketball team did a series of cultural dilemmas present themselves; first, gaining permission to play on the team, second, working within her cultural parameters to acquire parental permission (i.e., deferring to her father's authority by "begging and pleading"), and the third was acquiring permission to wear track pants in order to not show her legs. Playing on a basketball team might be seen as a non-

contentious issue for many Canadian adolescents. However, for East Indian girls from conservative families, a seemingly innocent issue highlights oppositional expectations and values. This woman's story demonstrates that these situations can be negotiated, but require multiple levels of negotiations. One context is steeped in religious and cultural traditions/values that dictates stricter personal guidelines and limits and a North American system that conversely affords more personal freedom with respect to dress, personal presentation, and social interactions. Young girls caught between these two systems can feel an intense push and pull in opposite directions as they attempt to situate themselves within each system. Feeling awkward and out of place was a common sentiment articulated by participants who struggled with this positioning during their childhood years.

Many participants became aware of being different at an early age; however for others, appreciating some of the more subtle implications of one's racial and ethnic status emerged later in life. One participant offered the following example from her university experience that exemplified being perceived and classified as a "woman of colour" - a classification and label with which she did not self-identify with.

> And then when I was 18…19, I actually went to McGill for my undergrad and I remember being there frosh week and being approached….you know all the clubs and stuff come out right and again I hadn't really conceptualized myself as a minority woman or anything like that before. And there was a women of colour group called Ashanti, I don't know if they're still there and they were coming around with their little pamphlets and they approached me and gave me a

> pamphlet and they were selectively giving it out to women of colour. And that was their big thing – women of colour meet and unite and bla bla bla and I was looking at it going women of colour....is that what I am? And I remember just looking around at who else got it and there was a Chinese girl and an African girl and I was like how weird is that! Like is that what I look like?

Another participant described how entering university normalized her racial and ethnic identity and enabled her to situate herself more securely within her East Indian identity as an adult.

> You know, I don't know when it started but I guess as my boys got older because my eldest is in grade 11 and the other one is in grade five. But I don't know.....but actually, I did my MBA, I started in 1989 and that's probably the first time I was old enough...I was 27 or 26, something like that, but old enough and there were enough other cultures at the university in terms of foreign students like I had a friend that was from Cambodia and another one that was from Hong Kong and that kind of thing – and Chinese backgrounds, and a couple of them from India. And so....and then of course there was some White people too, but we were just a whole group and it didn't matter. And I think that's when I just started looking around and going oh, like it's ok not to be White. Isn't that stupid?

> Mostly it was being around such a diverse group. Because even in my undergrad, I lived in residence...it was pretty much....here....a lot of rural people came in

> and not a lot of East Indians…a few. But I guess I didn't really have anything in common with the immigrants who had come right from India. Because I was born and bred here. <pause> But yeah, I think it was being around the other people and then just slowly it just broadened. And there were a couple of them that were East Indians and we'd go over to his house and they'd cook big meals and stuff – that community sense came back. And then just over the years it's got…..I mean, considering for so long I didn't…what's the word…..I disowned that side of me, I mean even now you go – you don't know Edmonton, but in Millwood's, it's very East Indian and there's some areas you go – like Millwoods Town Centre, you'll run into tons of them. But you know, they all smile at you. It's like oh my God, I fit in somewhere! Because quite frankly I don't fit in with the German's because I'm not white.

While negotiating the attitudes, assumptions and stereotypes from mainstream society, they also faced a similar set of issues from within their own ethnic communities in terms of their behaviour, social activities, non-traditional lifestyles and their physical appearance. Living and socializing out of the prescribed boundaries of their ethnic community often left these women facing negative reactions. Their ethnic communities sometimes perceived their non-traditional lifestyles and Canadian friends as a threatening influence to the integrity of their cultural traditions and did not want their children to socialize with participants. Consequently, some women also found themselves being marginalized within their communities based on some of the personal choices they made and friendships they maintained.

But I didn't truly embrace my culture until much later – probably around 18 or 19 years old and up until then it was always....I didn't really like going to social functions at mosque, I was teased a lot for being dark and I was called a lot of really nasty names from other East Indian Muslim's to me – so even within my cultural group I was probably teased more by the Muslim East Indians than I was....and I was teased for hanging out with white people and called names for that. Yeah, other parents of kids wouldn't allow their kids to hang out with me because they assumed I had other friends outside the community – I must be smoking and drinking and partying and whereas I knew all of their kids were doing all those things. I was probably the only one that wasn't. But that was sort of the mentality is that..."Dorias", I don't know if you know, that word means Whities. It's slang for...so in the Muslim culture or Ismaili Muslim or whatever would always say Dorias, they're not like us, they're different. So whenever I would affiliate with them, parents would get very...wanting to pull their kids away "No, no, she'll become one of them" and there was this fear of losing their culture and fear that they had all these other things in their life and other social stuff that we didn't have...divorce wasn't very common so if I hung out with kids who were of divorced families, other families would be very....they didn't really like that or if I was hanging out in the mall or dressing a little bit differently.....parents wouldn't really like that. So I got teased a lot from within my community, but I saw them every Saturday, we had to go to religious classes

and almost four out of seven days a week we were at mosque in the evening. So we were quite involved. But I just never established a group of friends there.

The issue of fitting in is a complex phenomenon that reflects how these women face the challenges of negotiating and situating themselves within and between two social and cultural contexts. Each context offers its own distinct issues regarding minority status and reflects the dilemmas of simultaneously being an insider and outsider in both worlds. This often left these women walking a fine line between their East Indian and Canadian environments.

What Happens when Cultures Clash

This category represented the tensions and challenges these women experienced in the context of social relationships, their families, the East Indian community and mainstream Canadian society. This issue was not limited to any particular phase or stage of their lives but instead represented an ongoing issue to be negotiated. Overt examples of cultural clashes included experiences of racism, a lack of acceptance by mainstream society, and clashes within their families about personal decisions that often moved them away from cultural norms. Although more covert experiences included constantly having to defend one's legitimate status as a Canadian in the face of questions, and assumptions about their nationality (i.e., Where are you "really" from because you can't be Canadian?, or You speak English well – how long have you been in Canada?).

Being a Real Canadian

Constantly facing the assumption that they were "not Canadian" and continually being perceived as an outsider/foreigner solidified their awareness of living in the

margins. The inherent assumption underlying questions about one's nationality is that being Canadian is synonymous with being White. A person might be an invisible ethnic minority and not have identifying characteristics that disclose an immigrant identity such as accented speech; they are less likely to have their nationality challenged. One participant offered a poignant example from her life.

> I needed to get my passport updated. I had heard that you could travel with an expired passport if you had two pieces of identification. So I went to the immigration office, I just went to confirm that that was true and the man that I talked to…I don't know who he was…he was in a uniform, he worked for the office of Immigration, but he…it was the way he looked at my passport, didn't look at me, glanced me over briefly and the funny thing was, it was really, really subtle, it was subtle enough that someone could easily say you imagined it, you're being paranoid, perhaps it wasn't about that. And you know, perhaps it wasn't, but as an adult, I had never had such a strong feeling of….like it was an intuitive – absolutely intuitive – and unmistakable feeling, like it was very strong. I didn't know what was going on. It makes me realize too, that as an adult, I don't actually walk around feeling…even though I like who I am, I like the fact that I'm East Indian, I like my ethnicity, I like my ancestry, my culture, I like all of those things but I don't walk around feeling….I feel Canadian. I feel as Canadian as anybody else and this is one of the first things that made me realize that what I am is Canadian. That's how…. I mean I identify myself as East Indian, but I'm Canadian. I've been a Canadian citizen since 1960's….well we came here in 1965

and then within a matter of months or…it was very shortly after we came here that I…I've been a Canadian for most of my…since a wee child and this man is looking at my passport and it says on there – well for one thing it says somewhere at the front – the bearer of this passport is a Canadian citizen but for some reason he didn't see it… But he's flipping through it and he sees country of birth and I was born in Uganda and it was just the way he said "you're not Canadian"…what's this - it says you were born – Uganda, Africa. And he says well you're not Canadian. And it was just the dismissive…it's completely dismissive and….just completely dismissive and the thing that got me about it was how that affected me because I just thought you know, I'm looking at him and I'm looking at the difference between him and I, and I'm thinking he's white and he's male, and what he says is not true. I am a Canadian, I'm as Canadian as he is. And possibly have been a Canadian longer than him for all we know….maybe even more Canadian! But the fact that he's white and male and I'm East Indian and female, I don't know what the female and male meant to me, but somehow it's just like….well I did know what it meant, it is a certain sense of legitimacy to be anywhere and the fact that he was white gave him that legitimacy as well. So even though what he said wasn't true, and even though it angered me, it angered me terribly. It was bizarre, he had this ability for me to suddenly feel invalid as a person next to him – that I'm not Canadian and….somehow that he had the power to make that true even though I knew it wasn't and even though I knew he was a pompous dismissive jerk, he somehow had the power to make me feel very small or I felt that he had the power to make me feel very small.

This participant's story represents a common experience for several women who found that their visible ethnic minority status often led to individuals questioning the legitimacy of their status as "real" Canadians. While not all participants experienced such explicit confrontations, they often encountered situations in their daily experience that challenged their status as Canadians through questions such as "How long have you been in Canada, you speak English very well, or No, where are you really from? ". These experiences simply added to participants' frustrations and internal struggle in evaluating how they fit into Canadian society. Their frustration arose in having to continually explain or defend the fact that they were born in Canada or had held citizenship for many years and therefore were Canadian. Several participants questioned why they were always the target for these questions and not other Whites who could have been immigrants from Eastern Europe or other European countries. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that their visible ethnic and racial status ran contrary to mainstream society's perception of what constituted being Canadian. Obviously, being Canadian meant being White. Interestingly, participants responses to such questions often highlighted that they probably had been in this country as long if not longer then some of their White peers, thereby suggesting that they were "more Canadian" than the individual challenging their status. These examples raise several questions for consideration (a) What criteria lend to being perceived as a "real" Canadian?, (b) What attitudes and beliefs does mainstream society continue to hold regarding the status of visible ethnic minorities in this country?, and (c) What are the implicit and explicit messages given to

ethnic minority individuals in light of these types of questions (i.e., can they ever be perceived as being legitimately Canadian?).

Challenges of Negative Attitudes and Stereotypes

In addition to questions about one's citizenship participants also faced other assumptions and negative reactions about how East Indians are perceived by mainstream society. Frequently these comments communicated the idea that East Indians were uneducated, or unskilled labourers and generally perceived to be a homogenous ethnic group.

> I know before Christmas we were out at a friend's birthday and she had a friend join us who was very drunk and proceeded to tell us the story of this cab driver who came <inaudible> and proceeded to tell the story, and of course the cab driver had an accent so he did the East Indian accent and I just....I sat there and I just thought oh God. So I thought what do I do? Do I take this on or do I not take this on? And finally I was just like why do White people keep doing East Indian cab drivers? And he sort of was listening do you want to say something and I said no, he's very drunk, so how would I be helping him because really what I want to do is lean over and go hey, you're talking about my brother in law or my dad or my brother so shut up. And as it was, he didn't really impress anyone in the group that night. So there are times in a group I may stand up and say something but you know what, how can you, but I'm getting better at picking and choosing where to give my energy to. In a situation like that, it wasn't good – he wouldn't have learned anything from it and he would have just apologized profusely because he was very drunk – it would have never ended. And it wouldn't have

been…I don't need the apology, it's like go apologize to the cab drivers. So I think does it change a little bit in the group that you're in? Yeah, because you still have to measure things like personal safety and personal risk. So it's a balance – it is a balance in personal risk and what do you want to say and what do you want to do? Is it personally worth it?

Participants expressed outrage and anger when confronted by racist comments and often were prepared to confront the situation because they felt directly targeted. Prior to dating an East Indian woman, their White partners had been oblivious to these types of remarks, behaviour, and attitudes from peers in their social circle. They gained insight and awareness about insidious racism as a function of their East Indian girlfriends. This in turn forced them to enter a more critical process of examination regarding the issues of racism and discrimination in society and within their own families. The emerging sensitivity of their male partners served to help these women negotiate various situations and also served as an additional source of support.

And I mean, he has even….I don't know within the last…but I gave that example of walking out of Cowboys and some guy saying "Are you waiting for the Paki cab driver?" and it was freezing out and (boyfriend) looks at me and says do not take this on, it's not the time or place, it's not going to do any good. Let it go. And I'm like oh, and he says you can't fight every battle here. So it's interesting….it's interesting because he's never dated a Christian that's coloured before so he's never been respective to the types of comments or the types of things….so he's…I find he's noticing now as well, which is challenging. I mean

> even within his own family. I don't know that...I mean his dad is an 85 year old German man who grew up in Austria and grew up and then came over to Alberta and grew up on a farm. Never....I'm sure I'm the first person of colour that's ever stayed in his house. And I mean I think he has been __ once or twice but he doesn't think people of different colours should mix. So it's been....I think it's been challenging for (boyfriend) on a lot of levels as well. So I do think....yeah, I think I have a responsibility for how I see people in my life, what I choose to do with it and how that goes.

The stereotypes women encountered regarding society's perception of East Indian was disconcerting to many of them. Interestingly, most of the assumptions centred on stereotypes of East Indian men rather than women. Younger East Indian men were perceived to be potential trouble-makers in bars or clubs and therefore their entrance into these establishments was monitored, whereas the image of older East Indian men often presented them as uneducated and unskilled labourers (i.e., cab drivers or convenience store clerks). It is remarkable to note that none of the stereotypes presented East Indians in a positive light, contrary to literature that often describes them as a model minority.

> I like to go to a lot of hip-hop parties and stuff like that, and this one guy who throws it, he's East Indian. So we don't have that problem where you're not going to get in because you're coloured whereas if you choose to go to another club, like Tonic or something like that, you will have a problem to get in because of your colour. And especially if you're a male and you're coloured. You'll have a very hard time getting in, and more of a hard time of getting is if you're with

other coloured as well – if you're a coloured male with White people, you'll get in, but you won't if you're not. So I think that kind of also makes it harder and will also affect where you will go. I mean I don't choose to go to places like that, it's like no thanks. One time when I went to…it wasn't Tonic, it was actually Inferno at that time, and it wasn't so much the bouncers, it was actually the people who were going into the club and one of my friends left her I.D. in the car so I had to go with her to go get her I.D. and I didn't want her to walk alone outside, so I told my two friends you stay here and the bouncer said "Go ahead and go to the car, just come straight to the front". So I'm like ok, so we go to the car and we come back and these guys are standing in front of me – these big White guys and as we go "Excuse me, the bouncer said we could just go straight to the front, my friend just forgot her I.D.", and they saw us leaving and they ignored us, they wouldn't look at us, and it's like excuse me…and I know he heard me and then I just kind of looked at my friend and we're like ok, what do we do? And I got pissed off and I just kind of shoved my hand in between him and his friend and I pushed them like this and I squeezed myself through and then he kind of pushed me back – and my friend – and he's like "oh, is that what the fuck you guys do in India? Go back to India" And I was like oh my God…did that really come out of his mouth?

I think my parents wanted to move away because East Indians have come with a bad rep in the last few years, it's had a bad rep and you always get the derogatory name calling or you have the….the stereotype for what an East Indian is. If you tell people you're East Indian, they automatically assume that your dad….like I

know this one girl in my class, she automatically assumed my dad was another cab driver or my dad worked in 7-11 [convenience store]. And I'm like excuse me? Not all East Indians are like that, there's a lot of educated people and I don't....my parents are probably more highly educated than you. So that's the thing that people even now they still – a lot of people have come to understand that <inaudible> is a culture, they're still very ignorant about it.

Although not all of these experiences were heavily laden with negative stereotypes there nonetheless existed the common assumption that all East Indians are a homogeneous group, even in terms of religion. One participant recounted how her work colleagues questioned how she could teach at a Christian school because they automatically assumed she was Hindu.

Honestly, I really don't know how to accept that except in the sense that <pause> I think its something I'm aware of and I know but I can't do anything except explain to them<pause> what I know, you know this in the sense, for example, um <pause> I'm just thinking of (inaudible) school which is a Christian based philosophy within the public school system. And as soon as they saw me there, like some of the staff and this is just plain ignorance this is not <pause> I don't blame them but yet <pause> <laugh> because they are educated people, you know, like you should know a little bit more about the world than just Canada. But um as soon as they saw me there, the first thing they thought was that I was Hindu, they were wondering how I could teach in school, because you had to be Christian. And that was based strictly on what they saw of me just because I'm

> brown <pause> you know<pause> and so when I started talking to them I make a point of saying that I am (inaudible). I feel I have to justify myself, I think is what it is. Is saying yes I am East Indian but I am a Christian and I've been raised as a Christian and you know? You know I just feel like as soon as people see me (inaudible) try to classify me as what they picture an East Indian person should be like. I find myself reacting to them off the bat, explaining to them. Just like in how I talk, you know, when you're casually talking you kind of tell them a little bit about yourself and things like that. I'll bring things like that up and it's hard like I don't know how I <pause> I haven't accepted it I guess and I just assume it's going to be something that's part of life. You know like, it's natural.

These situations were common occurrences in the daily lives of many participants and they pervaded their social, personal, and professional interactions. Some women remarked that although they felt angry and frustrated that they had resigned themselves to the fact that they would always encounter these stereotypes. They coped with these situations in a variety of ways, some reacted by getting angry and confronting individuals while others saw it as an opportunity to educate the people around them. The responsibility to educate or even confront these situations became tiring for participants at times. Several women remarked on having to consider a personal safety issue when deciding to assert themselves in specific situations (i.e., racist comments from men in a bar). Although no participants recounted instances of violence they nonetheless acknowledged that this was a possible reality. One participant recounted that after the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States she insisted that her teenage sons wear

Christian crosses around their necks and go out as a group with their White friends so they would not mistaken as Iraqi, Muslim, or Afghani and consequently targeted by racists. Particularly in light of recent global events concern over being targets of violence based on one's race (or mistaken racial and ethnic identity) present a legitimate concern.

Overall, instances of cultural clashes contributed to an increasing sense of marginalization and vigilance over how they either fit in or stood out in different social situations. This also resulted in women monitoring where they might go out and with whom they might socialize. Often the issue of skin complexion/complexion was the defining component of their marginalization.

Women who were fair complexioned did not report overt experiences of racism but, rather, more subtle and vicarious experiences. They were not the direct targets of racist comments or behaviour, however, they did witness these comments from others and faced the challenges of (a) identifying themselves as East Indian, (b) acknowledging that they were treated differently from some other individuals solely based on skin colour, (c) confronting racist comments and behaviour when they witnessed them, (d) educating others about issues of race and ethnicity, and (e) being placed in the position of spokesperson for all ethnic minority groups. Simultaneously, fair complexioned women also became very aware of how their physical appearance offered them some level of privilege and access to mainstream society (i.e., passing for White, or being perceived as exotic).

Clashes within the East Indian Community

Cultural clashes within the East Indian community were exemplified in criticism from the community about the life choices made by some participants. Examples are,

delaying marriage or not agreeing to an arranged marriage, marrying a White man, living alone, or choosing to live a more North American lifestyle.

> Well it's like the world as a community – you have to be this way, you have to present yourself this way, in order to belong to the community. And just by the fact that I am marrying a white person, that's a huge transgression to the rules of the community, or the fact that I'm living in Calgary, so far away from my parents with no family, that's a rule of the community that I have transgressed. It's ok to get all this education, but it's got to put in its place, you know? If I were to enter into the community, I'd have to find a place for my education in the background not in the foreground, but those are the rules of the community that people don't say but you know what they are, when you grow up.

Transgressing the rules of the community also contributed to a sense of marginalization for some women, that resulted in a partial disconnection or distancing from their ethnic community or even their families at times. While these periods of distancing were not permanent and eventually did get resolved they did create a source of internal tension and conflict. The cultural value of being connected to one's family and community were strongly ingrained in many women so that being removed from that connection left a temporary gap in their lives. Negotiating this gap also served as issues to be considered in redefining personal and cultural values as they created a personal definition of their East Indian identity.

Creating a Balance/Resolution of Conflict

This category is partially connected to the category of "How these women retain their East Indian-ness". The overlap is evident in the fact that to create a balanced and blended identity, an individual must go through the process of self-questioning, deconstructing and reconstructing their attitudes, values, and beliefs. This is a process many participants embarked on in determining which elements of the East Indian cultural and ethnic identity they would carry forward into their adult lives and personal relationships. However, the category labelled resolution was developed to reflect participant's responses to the final interview question " What advice or suggestions would you offer another East Indian woman who may be facing similar issues and experiences we have discussed?" All participants in this study offered very similar responses to this question. The common elements of the advice they would offer another East Indian women was that: (a) to tell her that negotiating two cultural systems is a personal process of determining boundaries, (b) it is a challenging process that requires you determine what internal and external risks you are willing take, (c) it requires that you look within yourself to determine what values are important to you as an individual and then work outwards from that point to create your life to reflect those personal and cultural values, and (d) that working through this is a lifelong process that includes many shifts and evolutions.

> Well, I think I've figured out where I'm willing to risk and where I'm not, and my own personal boundaries. And those may shift...I may go through shifts, but I think it allows me to make decisions for myself. I may go through where I kind

of go oh...so maybe I haven't said it in the right way or maybe I need to think about how can I say what I want to say because obviously it wasn't too well. So then I go back and think about it and then I may go talk to someone about it and say what would you recommend? So I think it just helps to keep you....to have those experiences will always help ground you and help you figure out what are the parameters, what are you willing to take on and what aren't you willing to take on? What are you willing to say, what aren't you willing to say. What are you willing to challenge yourself on and what aren't you. But like I said, I never think that you're an island onto yourself, you have relationships and surround yourself with <inaudible> and you can get advice, whether it's good for you or not. As I said, I think it's a life long....realizing it's life long and yeah, you can put it away for awhile but it comes back, it's always kind of there, who are you, what do you want to do, who do you want to be like, who do you want to be around, those sorts of things. And it's an important part of culture, if I wanted to be more East Indian, I could be but that's if I wanted, and then I would probably be a <inaudible> East Indian culture for me and how I'm ok with the influences that I have. So I really think it's just a journey.

I would probably try and help her figure out what she thinks are the best of both worlds. But I think probably the underlying issue is figuring out what her values are and keeping things in her life that align with those values. I think that works for any situation really. You need to figure out what you value the most and then live your life according to those values because if you're not living your life

according to those values, that's when you experience conflict – in any situation. But probably the issue with some people is they're not quite sure what those values are or how to verbalize them or how to....how they play out in their lives. So that's probably what I would say. But I think that's when you start looking inside yourself. Let's just take the example of this individuality and the community. There is a place where everyone feels comfortable on that whole continuum, and it's just a matter of finding that spot and adjusting your life so it fits a little bit better. I don't know if I said that the right way. But it's always the continuum, there's always one end of the spectrum and the other end, and we're all not going to be on one extreme or the other. So it's just a matter of figuring out where you fall on the spectrum and then taking a look at your life and cutting out what's causing the conflict for you. Or not cutting it out, adjusting it. And sometimes I think we really just need to suck it up sometimes. There's some situations where we do need to...our times and suck it up, and agree within our own minds that we disagreed with what's going on, but not become involved in it. So choosing your battles I think is a really important thing to do.

Creating a balance within one's cultural values and personal belief systems is a difficult task. All participants described the task as an ongoing, life long process that would never be completely resolved, but was one that simply became easier to negotiate over time. By facing repeated instances of discrimination and having gained more life experience, these women were able to actively construct their ethnic identity into a

congruent whole. This identity encompassed their personal, ethnic, gender and cultural values more completely.

Summary

The six categories developed from the interview data reflected salient themes that were woven through participants' lives from early childhood into adulthood. Each category does not define a separate and distinct experience but instead represents overlapping experiences and critical instances in these women lives.

The bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women may be more appropriately described and defined in the context of intersections. The intersection of ethnicity, race, culture and gendered influences paints a complex and engaging picture of these women's lives. The multiple identities they hold are fluid and dynamic identities that continue to evolve and change with life experience.

Living with competing and parallel cultural value systems can be seen as an underlying theme that informs how second-generation women construct their ethnic identity. While these participants juggled both Canadian and East Indian values in their daily lives, the East Indian values predominated. Although their upbringing firmly grounded them in a specific belief system and ethnic community, as adults they took on the task of re-evaluating and realigning their cultural values. This was a source of tension for many women, but it allowed them to create a personal space.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The findings represent the narratives of 16 second-generation East Indian women who grew up in the prairie provinces of Canada. They are a high functioning group of women who come from diverse Indian cultural origins. Diversity within the group is reflected through their immigration history, regional differences, languages, social class, socio-economic status, ages, cultural practices, and religious affiliations. These factors are representative of the heterogeneity within the East Indian immigrant community in Canada.

This study will not address the historical, cultural and religious diversity of India, but, rather, is focused on understanding the subjective experience of adult second-generation women who have been raised in Canada, and the influence of this socialization on their ethnic identity and construction of cultural values. Participant's stories revealed a wide scope of experiences that reflected their distinct religious, social, family, and cultural backgrounds. Although each woman had a unique story to share, several commonalities emerged across their personal stories. These commonalities create the foundation of the six central themes identified in the data. The themes represent issues that continually re-emerged over the course of these women's lives and reflected their experience of growing up as a visible ethnic minority woman.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of their biculturalism from a cultural and social context, it becomes important to understand how these women define and give meaning to their experiences. As visible ethnic minority women, their lives have been influenced by factors such as race, cultural values, gender rules and expectations, and

societal attitudes. Growing up in Canadian society also presented numerous challenges that included facing instances of discrimination and racism, struggling with personal decision making in the face of opposing cultural values, and deciding how to locate oneself within two social and cultural milieus. Navigating these issues forces an individual to grapple with broader questions of identity. The crossroads and intersections of identity that emerge in their lives encompass paradoxes and mixed messages received from family, society and their ethnic community. These issues demand that an individual engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection to situate herself within her existing cultural and social milieu. For example, growing up as a visible ethnic minority person raises questions such as (a) Where do I belong?, (b) How do I feel connected and disconnected to my community and mainstream society?, (c) How do I identify myself? and (d) How do others perceive and position me? An underlying issue then becomes comprehensively creating ways of integrating one's diverse cultural values and experiences into a congruent whole and living simultaneously as an insider and outsider both in Canadian society and one's ethnic community.

It was the objective of this study not to solely compare and contrast the experiences of East Indian women to that of mainstream Canadian society or Canadian women but, rather, to understand the lives of these women from their own perspective and cultural context, and to highlight the ways in which they have negotiated their biculturalism. The disciplines of multicultural and feminist counselling have raised our awareness of the importance of not taking an ethnocentric perspective in contextualizing and giving meaning to the experiences of people of colour, particularly ethnic minority women (Comas-Dias & Greene, 1994; Espin, 1995; Neville, Worthington, &

Spanierman, 2001). This argument rests on the premise that taking an ethnocentric perspective typically leaves us understanding the behaviour, actions, and values of individuals from minority groups from a deficit perspective because they do not meet the norms prescribed by North American culture (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Neville et al., 2001; Ponterotto et al., 2001).

Understanding how participants have developed a sense of personal congruence with their ethnic identity and cultural values will follow.

Brief Overview of Findings

Themes

The six themes identified from the data were (a) *how participants were taught to be East Indian*, (b) *how they were simultaneously expected to be Canadian*, (c) *how they retained their East Indian-ness,* (d) *the challenges they faced in fitting in and not fitting in into Canadian society and their own ethnic communities*, (e) *cultural clashes*, and (f) *how they created a balance and sense of personal congruence in their ethnic identity and cultural values.*

It is important to note that the salience of specific themes waxed and waned with respect to different life experiences and age groups. For example, the themes of *fitting in and not fitting in* appeared most salient during participants' childhood and adolescent years but became less significant as women entered their 30s and 40s. This can partially be framed within a developmental framework which asserts that as women mature, they gain an increasing sense of personal authority and are able to exercise personal decision making and express their choices with increased internal authority (Enns, 1997; Goldhor-Lerner, 1988).

The issue of *fitting in* and *not fitting in* is a multidimensional phenomenon based on a combination of racial, ethnic, and cultural variables. It is also implicitly connected to being simultaneously an insider and an outsider in both mainstream Canadian society and within their own ethnic community, thus often leaving these women to walk along the margins of both cultural communities. The most evident and dramatic example of holding an identity as an insider and outsider emerged through the awareness of racial difference, skin colour, and complexion. They faced discrimination and racism from Canadian society due to their visibility which placed them on the margins of mainstream society. Yet they also faced a similar stigma from within their ethnic communities as a function of being darker or lighter complexioned.

How women were taught to be East Indian and simultaneously *Expected to be Canadian* also presented itself as a more critical issue during their childhood and young adulthood. They learned the cultural and gendered rules of being an East Indian girl through role modeling from their parents and through their consistent interactions with their East Indian peers and ethnic community. For several women, these lessons, cultural rules, and expectations were both explicitly and implicitly communicated. They were also made more obvious and explicit through their interactions with White peers. Participants readily acknowledging how their lives and beliefs were both similar and different from their White peers. Contradictory cultural values fuelled their self-examination and their progressive deconstruction of culturally based beliefs and attitudes. The internal struggle that ensured represented a life long critique and evaluation of self, a process that allowed them to consciously situate themselves between two cultural worlds.

The theme of *cultural clashes* demonstrated the tensions, challenges, and cultural value conflicts that emerged for these women in the context of different personal situations. Sometimes these tensions emerged as they tried to fit in with their White peers and attempted to cajole their families into giving them more personal freedoms and privileges. Cultural clashes were also evident as these women were confronted with racial stereotypes and derogatory comments in social interactions and encounters. Facing cultural clashes in both personal and professional settings continually reminded participants that their racial difference would set them apart from their White counterparts. This realization also forced them to question who they were in relation to societal attitudes, and to decide how to confront and address these situations because they constantly occurred. On a positive note, these experiences also helped them to gain an increasing sense of personal authority and skill in navigating these situations. For example, as one participant remarked, she had to learn when it was worthwhile for her to confront racist comments and educate others about her ethnicity, and when she should simply walk away from potentially dangerous situations with respect to her personal safety. Many women commented, that negotiating cultural clashes forced them to engage in an ongoing process of personal reflection, make conscious choices about how they were going to live their lives, and decide which relationships they would prioritize. Many of them felt that their White peers did not have to struggle repeatedly with questions about their belief systems, cultural heritage, ethnicity, race, and cultural values on a regular basis. Consequently, they believed that their White peers did not have to struggle with defining, deconstructing and reconstructing their identity in the same way that they did. As a result of these experiences, participants felt that they possessed a

larger repertoire of personal and interpersonal skills, and a more intuitive sensitivity and awareness towards issues of diversity.

Finally, the themes of retaining their East Indian-ness and creating a balance in their ethnic and cultural values were issues that became more salient as they progressed though their adulthood. The issue of marriage and children was commonly cited as a life event that required them to revisit the issue of cultural values, ethnic identity and how they wanted to integrate and incorporate these dimensions of their personal identity into their lives. The choice of when to marry (age), who to marry (an East Indian or non-East Indian man) and the potential biracial status of the future children were all issues that demanded a reexamination of how they envisioned situating and positioning themselves in their lives and within the context of their cultural identity. Six of the women in the study were married. Of these 6 women, 4 were married to non-East Indian men (White) and 2 were married to East Indian men. Although 4 of the 6 constituted mixed marriages, none of these included marriages to men of African-Canadian, Asian, or Mediterranean heritage.

These women faced an ongoing internal struggle to integrate their East Indian cultural values into the different areas of their lives, but ultimately they created a viable blend that allowed them to feel congruent within themselves, their personal, social, and professional relationships. Although outwardly their personal struggle was not always evident, it required an active and conscious construction of self and represented a fluid, dynamic and continually evolving personal questioning of identity.

As noted earlier, each of these themes represents overlapping and intersecting issues in their lives and bicultural experience, rather than static, and fixed dimensions of

their experience. Negotiating cultural values conflicts, shifts, and transitions was an active and ongoing process in each woman's life. No woman described herself as having achieved resolution and closure on any of these issues but, rather, described this as an evolving process that was revisited with different levels of understanding and awareness.

In addition to the themes that situated participants' bicultural experience, several additional contexts also contributed to their personal development. These contexts defined how many participants came to perceive and position themselves, and centred on the following issues (a) social context, (b) visibility as it connects to their racial status, (c) the significance of cultural values as a defining element in their lives, and (d) how they negotiate and navigate their bicultural identity and cultural values.

Social Context

Growing up as a "visible minority" in the prairie provinces was a defining element for many women in the study. Aside from their immediate families, they grew up with few role models, mentors, or positive images of what it meant to be East Indian. The absence of other visible ethnic minority groups (exclusive of the local Aboriginal population) also contributed to their sense of being outcast and not fitting into mainstream Canadian society. This social context was the cornerstone that positioned these women as visible ethnic minorities relative to mainstream society. It also contributed to establishing the paradoxical identity of simultaneously being insiders and outsiders.

The limited demographic diversity in the prairie provinces is noted by Li (1999, 2003) who described the settlement of the prairie provinces as mainly consisting of European immigrants (Ukrainian, German, Polish, and Dutch). The settlement of a larger

Asian and Sikh community occurred predominantly in British Columbia. The fact that few East Indians initially settled in the other western provinces sets the stage to understand what it meant to be an East Indian girl for the women in this study. Consequently, participant's racial and cultural differences became a notable feature, one that definitively set them apart from their Canadian counterparts in this social context. As a result, they often encountered instances of racism and discrimination from external sources. Although, exploring the reasons for migration are beyond the scope of this study, a discussion of how racist attitudes affected participant's sense of self will be examined.

All participants perceived and identified themselves as Canadian and East Indian. Growing up in Canada, they understood and absorbed the cultural rules, attitudes and behaviours of the dominant culture concurrently with their East Indian ethnic culture. Being East Indian and Canadian simultaneously situated them as insiders and outsiders; insiders, because they defined themselves as Canadians, and outsiders because society perceived them to be foreigners based on their racial difference. Within their ethnic communities, they were insiders in terms of sharing a similar ethnicity, cultural heritage, and values but still outsiders because they had adopted values, attitudes and behaviours from mainstream Canadian society. This status fundamentally left these women living in between the margins of the two cultures with which they identified and in which they lived.

For East Indian women, the reality of growing up in the prairie provinces can also be framed within a social constructionist perspective. The underlying assumptions of this perspective assert that an individual's understanding of the world is created and defined by social context. A construction of worldview emerges through interactions with others

(Gergen, 1985; Gonzalez, et al., 1994; Guerin, 1992). These interactions possess the power to label and classify a person but also to instil a differential power base between individuals and groups (Carter, 1995). For example, many women in the study described being called "paki" or "nigger", or being teased about their racial features. Society's construction and inferences of race implicitly and explicitly communicated that as East Indian girls, they were not like their peers, nor could they ever be like their peers. Hence, from a social constructionist orientation, participants' learned that they fell into a marginalized social category because of their racial status.

Role Models

They also had few role models and mentors from whom they could learn how to negotiate racism or their bicultural identity. Their parents represented one example of how to be East Indian, often the only example these girls could draw upon. However, their parents did not face the same social issues and did not construct their ethnic identity in the same way or within the same social circumstances as their children did (Akhtar, 1994; Dhruvarajan, 1993; Wakil, et al., 1981). Having grown up in a culture and society in their countries of origin that allowed them to have a majority identity (rather then a minority one) and within communities that shared the same cultural values, attitudes, and worldview created a different ethnic identity and sense of self for these East Indian immigrant parents. Although they faced their individual set of challenges as immigrants, these differed dramatically from the issues their children encountered (Akhtar, 1994; Das Gupta, 1997; Maira, 1998)

Participants generally described their mothers as important role models, first as examples of East Indian womanhood and second as women who were proud of their

ethnic identity, customs, and heritage. Specifically, women between the ages of 30 and 40 mentioned their mothers as individuals who established a sense of connection for their daughters to their culture and heritage. This connection was important in many ways because it often occurred in the absence of a connection to a larger ethnic community.

Outside Influences

Without a variety of influences (media, cultural activities, presence of an East Indian community) from which to learn about cultural traditions and practices, women between the ages of 30 and 40, in particular, described struggling to establish a strong connection and affiliation with their ethnic and cultural identity. Younger East Indian women between the ages of 20 and 30, described being more entrenched and connected to their cultural heritage, simply based on the fact that they often grew up at a time in which the East Indian community had become more established. This younger cohort has also grown up in a society in which racial and ethnic diversity is not only commonplace in the general population but is also appreciated in the popular culture through fashion, food, and media. Their older siblings or other women in the community served as their role models and therefore they did not experience the same degree of racial tensions or social isolation as the older participants. It was challenging for this older cohort of women to counteract actively the social stereotypes and attitudes they encountered during their childhood because they lacked a place to ground themselves in their own ethnic identity.

Family

The significance of family and a collectivist orientation are common values within the East Indian culture. Culturally speaking, women (i.e., mothers) hold the

primary role and responsibility of managing the home and transmitting cultural values to their children, particularly their daughters (Guzder & Krishna, 1991). A daughter's behaviour, demeanour, and cultural etiquette are often seen as a positive reflection of a family. They reflect and carry their family's sense of honour and reputation. Hence, a transgression on the part of an East Indian girl has broader implications then merely with respect to herself as an individual (Wakil, et al., 1981). Therefore, from a cultural perspective, it is reasonable to assume that mothers presented a strong and positive influence for their daughters. The majority of participants came from intact families, and very few women directly mentioned the influence their fathers had on their lives or cultural identity. It seemed that fathers were almost on the periphery during the participants' childhood and moved more into the foreground during their adolescence, primarily as rule makers. The impression given by participants was that their fathers were seen as head of the household, as providers, and as authority figures, but not as directly influential in shaping participants' personal and cultural identity. Although mothers often represented traditional cultural values, they also encouraged their daughters to integrate and adapt to Canadian society and cultural norms, but often within the cultural parameters determined by the family. This was accomplished by allowing their daughters to speak English in the home, wear North American clothes, eat North American food, and socialize with Canadian peers. In this way, the mothers encouraged their daughters to develop a more contemporary identity than that of a traditional East Indian girl. They encouraged the participants to assert themselves, become involved in sports and academic activities, become self-reliant, and pursue higher education. The paradox of these mixed messages sets up a curious cultural push and pull for East Indian girls; they were

expected to abide by gender role expectations defined by cultural rules, yet, simultaneously, they were expected to adapt to North American norms that encouraged them to be self reliant, independent, and self-sufficient women.

Several women commented that their mothers appreciated immigrating to Canada because of the freedoms and privileges North American culture afforded women, implying that Canadian culture and society had fewer barriers and limitations for women. Therefore, even though their mothers represented the ideals of traditional cultural values they also upheld a unique blend of traditional and contemporary beliefs for their daughters, thus allowing their daughters a wider range and repertoire of choices and possibilities (Naidoo, 1988, 1992).

Visibility

The concept of visibility for East Indian women (like other visible minority individuals) is defined by their race (i.e., being East Indian versus White), and in terms of their skin complexion or colouring. Several participants described coming to understand from an early age that "being brown", (i.e., East Indian) was perceived negatively by individuals from the dominant population. Although the majority of women could not articulate explicitly how they came to this understanding, they clearly identified instances in which other people commented about their skin colour and physical appearance and thereby made them conscious about racial classification. These comments initiated an acknowledgment of their racial difference and communicated that being dark complexioned marginalized them within their ethnic community and within mainstream Canadian society. Hence, their "visibility" had many inferences and implications, and contributed to the social isolation of their childhood.

Skin Colour

One inference of race is connected to these women's awareness of racial hierarchies. It is important to note that during their childhood, Aboriginal communities constituted the primary visible minority group in the western provinces. Aboriginal communities in the western provinces then and now continue to face numerous negative stereotypes and oppressions. Participants described being aware of the racial hierarchy, stereotypes, and negative attitudes that existed in their social milieu with respect to the Aboriginal community. Several women described facing situations in which they were mistakenly perceived as Aboriginal. They also described feeling it was important to clarify the distinction between being East Indian from being Native Indian and clearly situating themselves in their specific ethnic group. Ironically, it was preferable in these instances to align themselves within an ethnic group that was also discriminated against but, nonetheless, was less stigmatized. It is interesting to note that even as children, they were clearly aware of the levels of racial hierarchy that existed in their social environment. They were able to articulate knowing that it was better to be seen as East Indian than Aboriginal given society's stereotypes of this community. The fact that their White counterparts had limited knowledge and experience of different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups further highlights the absence of diversity in the general population within these communities. Therefore, growing up in a socially isolated milieu and as a numerical minority was the principal context from which many participants began to construct and position themselves as visible ethnic minority women in Canadian society. This positioning inherently set the stage to define and understand oneself from a deficit

perspective, particularly when race was the primary identifying classification (Phinney, 1990, 1996).

Skin colour was often the primary source of discrimination during their childhood. Participants were oblivious of their race and generally reported perceiving themselves as being like their White peers. It was only as a function of other people's comments that they gained an awareness of their racial difference. The discrimination that often resulted initiated their sense of marginalization. Furthermore, disconnection from Canadian society became more pronounced with the awareness of their cultural differences in food, religious, and cultural practices. Being marginalized brought with it an understanding that they would never be completely Canadian, although they might define and perceive themselves as 100% Canadian.

Notions of Beauty

Notions of beauty and attractiveness are another inference of race. The social stigma of skin colour for these women also existed within their own ethnic communities. Within their ethnic community the issue of visibility was connected to their complexion as being light or dark skinned. In this context, they encountered instances of more subtle discrimination regarding their skin colour. Being too dark was perceived as a negative attribute, particularly for a girl, because it was connected to the issue of attractiveness and marriageability. This message is communicated in implicit and explicit ways to participants, and included comments about avoiding prolonged exposure to the sun for fear of becoming darker, that communicated concern about finding a suitable husband. Consequently, the implicit assumption is that lighter skinned women are considered more attractive. This message is evident in the popularity of East Indian movie stars, who are

typically fair skinned, and marriage advertisements that explicitly include a description of an individual as fair skinned. Together, these messages created a veritable catch-22 situation for East Indian girls and represented an additional burden to be negotiated.

Standing on the Borders

The issue of visibility, race, and skin colour again left these women standing on the borders. Not having a solid foundation on which to build a positive ethnic identity appeared to be a challenge with respect to the issues of social context and race. Although one's social context can be negotiated if an individual relocates, skin colour represents an internal, fixed and non-negotiable personal quality. The one exception to this rule arises with respect to biracial individuals. An individual of mixed racial ancestry has more flexibility in his/her self-presentation on the issue of racial identification (Root, 1990). An individual might not be clearly identifiable as belonging to one racial category and his/her racial self-identification may also shift depending on situations and circumstances. These individuals possess the ability to pass (as White). Two participants in the study were of mixed ancestry (White and East Indian). One participant's story of being simultaneously accepted by a boyfriend and rejected by his peers reveals the dilemma and cost of a biracial status. Again, this issue places these women within a marginalized category of being accepted and rejected, insider and outsider. Fundamentally, it illuminates the complexities of intersecting identities around the issue of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Cultural Values

Cultural values represented another salient dimension of participants' lives and the construction of their ethnic identity. Their socialization regarding East Indian cultural values occurred primarily through their families and ethnic communities and hence took place in a private sphere. Although these values were not always articulated clearly, they were communicated through example, role modeling, and remarks about how East Indian girls do not engage in certain behaviours. Simultaneously, their socialization into Canadian cultural values occurred through their peer relationships, general exposure to Canadian society, and the media and popular culture (i.e., a public sphere). The push and pull between these two spheres can be understood as exerting pressure on East Indian girls and creating internal dissonance between cultural values and periods of ambivalence regarding which code of values to accept. It is important to note that the influence of public sphere began to fade after adolescence, but the power of the private sphere remained consistent throughout the women's lives.

Cultural values were described as a central element in participants' way of being, and therefore, not something that could be separated or even categorized at times. It was simply a part of who they were, and blended with their ethnic, racial, and gender identities. The significance ascribed to cultural values was also evident in the importance participants placed on the adherence to and retention of cultural values in their decision making. For example, women who had been raised within their ethnic communities described how their social relationships were qualitatively different with their East Indian friends (vs. White friends) as a function of shared or similar cultural values. They described this qualitative difference in terms of not having to explain, defend, or justify

their belief systems or behaviour, situations they often encountered in other social relationships.

Cultural values were also the cornerstone for establishing a sense of identification, affiliation, and belonging to a community. Concurrently, this also served as the source of tension and internal struggles when they had to juggle competing and opposing cultural values. From an early age, they progressively became more proficient in performing this juggling act, which required them first to learn the distinct rules and expectations within each of their cultural and social frameworks and then to decide which set of values to prioritize at any given time and as a function of interactions and situations. The mechanisms by which they prioritized cultural values and the strategies they used varied across participants. However, an adaptive skill they mastered was adjusting their self-presentation in different contexts, thus acknowledging the idea of multiple and situational identities (Okamura, 1981).

Fundamentally, their Eastern cultural values centred on a collectivist, family-oriented, relational, hierarchical, and interdependent system of beliefs, whereas their Western value system promoted an individualist, autonomous, and independent way of being. The external struggle between these cultural systems was obvious in the ways these women tried to fit-in with their Canadian peers by seeking more personal freedom in adolescence or finding a lack of fit within some social relationships (see examples from chapter 5, Cultural Clashes). Internally, the struggle was less obvious to an outsider observer. On a personal level, and from an early age, these women embarked on a process of self-reflection that required them to examine, deconstruct, and reconstruct their belief systems and values. Their families and ethnic communities served as the

primary source of identification and affiliation with their East Indian heritage, whereas their peers served as a source of connection with their Canadian identity.

Cultural values defined and delineated appropriate gender, and social behaviour, particularly within their families and ethnic communities. Transgression of these values entailed weighty repercussions or the imagined threat of repercussions, mainly the possibility of alienation from family, social networks, and one's ethnic community. Although few women described experiencing strong or long lasting negative consequences to perceived transgressions, they did articulate the psychological distress this caused. They described having difficulty imagining being completely removed or alienated from their families, particularly given the strong collectivist orientation in which they had been raised since childhood. For example, several Hindu women described avoiding dating Muslim men because of the social, religious, and familial implications this decision carried. The cultural prescriptions around this issue seemed so entrenched and clearly understood by these women that their behaviour and personal decisions (at least on the issue of dating and marriage) were based on the idea of transgressing familial and cultural beliefs.

In conclusion, the aforementioned discussion has centralized the distinction between Eastern and Western values in the context of participants' lives. Although these value systems were identified as a significant source of conflict, they do not represent the only influences that contributed to shaping these women's lives. As second-generation individuals, their identity encompasses multiple influences, above and beyond simply how East meets West on a cultural values or worldview level. The congruence these women developed in terms of cultural values can be described more accurately as a

creation of a blended representation of cultural values that signified their unique positioning as second-generation East Indian women. Participant's essentially described having the freedom to selectively choose values from both eastern and western traditions in constructing their identity. Growing up in Canadian society and possessing a bicultural identity afforded them this freedom.

Bicultural Congruence

The bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women is a multilayered and multidimensional experience. Developing a sense of congruence or balance in their lives appeared to be an ongoing task for many women, that required them to revisit continually questions and issues of identity. The process was fraught with tensions, internal and intrapsychic struggles, and required engaging in an increasingly deeper process of self-reflection. Each woman described the process as a personal, conscious, and active effort. Making the decision to examine one's values and belief systems, fundamentally required these women the ask themselves "Why do I believe what I believe?".

Participants developed several coping strategies as they undertook the task of creating a comfortable middle ground within their biculturalism. One common strategy included repeatedly moving back and forth between a sense of connection and disconnection with their ethnic heritage, community, and family. A second strategy involved deconstructing cultural messages they had learned and absorbed throughout their lives. The salience of their ethnic identity also shifted in this process, and became more internally defined rather then structured by external influences. A final strategy involved learning to adjust one's presentation in the face of different social contexts.

Therefore through a process of trial and error these women inherently learned to make use of their situational identity and ethnicity.

Several women described facing the issue of marriage as an important life event that required them to reexamine cultural values, ethnic identity, tradition and customs, and expectations as issues for serious consideration. Within the context of psychosocial development or a larger developmental framework, the issue of choosing a life partner and moving into a different stage of life represents a significant personal shift. Participants' narratives highlighted the dilemma this question poses in their lives. Questions arose as to when or if to get married, whom to marry (an East Indian or non East Indian man), the implications of this choice for their families and in their own lives and the implications for their future children. Raising their children with a strong cultural and ethnic identity particularly with respect to marrying a non-East Indian man, became a serious consideration. For some women, this translated into wanting to marry an East Indian man because of the congruence they believed would exist in terms of cultural values.

Biculturalism is a common term in the research literature and is used to describe the experience of second and later generation immigrants. On reflection, the multiple influences that effect women's lives, decision-making, and construction of their identity, might be more accurately described as an intersection of multiple identities. As women, and particularly as visible ethnic minority women, they negotiate and navigate multiple roles that are framed within multiple contextual layers, none of which function independently or exclusively of each other. The complexity of these multiple contexts,

cultural influences, and roles lends to creating a complex negotiation of their place in Canadian society.

It is a combination of these complex factors and constructs that define and describe the bicultural experience of East Indian women in Canada. Particularly as second-generation immigrants and first-generation Canadians, these women walk between two worlds and have equal connection to each, thus making them simultaneously 100% Canadian and 100% East Indian. They do not leave behind their East Indian identity and culture in order to live like Canadians. Their experience of being the second-generation bridges the two worlds and does not exclusively situate itself within a single or normative cultural framework. These individuals are active agents in their lives, show a range of responses to various contexts, and make conscious choices about situating themselves in their world. They also take on the responsibility of educating others and serving as mentors or examples to younger generations of East Indian women.

Links to Previous Knowledge

Ethnic identification

In general, the women in this study all identified themselves as East Indian and as adults, felt a positive identification with their ethnic identity. None of the women used a hyphenated label such as Indo-Canadian or even the currently popular signifier of South Asian East Indian as a personal identifier. The meaning of being East Indian was inseparable from their identity as a woman, a wife, a mother, a daughter, student, or a professional woman. It influenced not only the way they perceived themselves, but also

their decision making, life choices, and social interactions; fundamentally their self presentation in the world.

The women who had grown up with a limited exposure to their cultural heritage also expressed an active interest and desire in learning more about their heritage, history, and traditions. Therefore, even the lack of connection to the rituals and customs, or connection to the ethnic community in childhood did not completely eliminate their need to reconnect and rediscover their ethnic heritage. In addition, even those women who had been entrenched in their ethnic communities expressed a continued desire to remain actively connected to their ethnic identity and cultural values.

Concern about dilution or loss of this dimension of their lives and identities was expressed as a significant concern for some participants. Even though they lived and integrated their cultural values and ethnic identity in a variety of ways in their lives, they also identified their nationality as Canadian, describing Canada as their home and a place in which they felt most comfortable to live. All the women expressed little desire to return to live in India, and only one woman had had an arranged marriage in India.

Although as adults they held a positive identification with their ethnic identity, this was not always the case during their childhood. As children, they each faced different degrees of racism and discrimination, and felt unable to create and hold a positive ethnic identification. However, throughout their adolescence and young adulthood, their identification shifted as they moved from feeling less isolated in their social communities and developed more social networks with East Indian and other ethnic minority peers.

The construct of ethnic identity is a complex issue and one that has been embedded in other concepts, such as acculturation and assimilation, and used

synonymously to mean racial identity (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Fischer & Moradi, 2001; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991). Generally, this construct refers to a person's sense of belonging to an ethnic group, that is the fact that a person's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behaviour are connected to their ethnic group membership (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). Ethnic identity includes a variety of components (a) ethnic awareness (an understanding of one's ethnic group and others), (b) ethnic self-identification (the label one uses to self-identify ethnicity), (c) ethnic attitudes (feelings about ones' own and other groups), and (d) ethnic behaviours (behaviour patterns specific to an ethnic group) (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). It is also important to note that ethnic identity relates to both group and individual processes. Debating the complexities of this construct is not within the scope of this discussion. However, the evolution, retention, and maintenance of cultural characteristics, and ethnic identity as an individual process relates to the findings of this study. The fact that participants' identification was at times situational was a significant revelation. The notion of situational ethnicity is premised on the idea that particular contexts, situations, and a person's evaluation of a situation, can determine the degree and extent to which a person feels comfortable expressing their ethnicity or a particular identity (Okamura, 1981). Women in this study made conscious and active choices in their lives about expressing their ethnicity. For example, as adolescents, some women described feeling progressively comfortable sharing their Indian social activities, food, clothes and music with some friends. However they also exercised their personal authority, and decision making power regarding with whom and when they would share these aspects of their ethnic identity.

Ho (1995) contends that individuals enculturated in more than one culture may develop multiple cultural identities; a concept he refers to bi-enculturation. The ability to shift or selectively adjust one's self-presentation was a skill that many women also developed in their lives. Learning to identify situations or individuals who would be open and positively respond to their multilayered and multileveled identity became an intuitive ability for many women. They sought these traits of open-mindedness and acceptance in the friendships and social relationships they maintained, dating relationships and the social events they attended.

One context in which the prioritization of the women's ethnic identity was critical was in their marriages or dating relationships with non East Indian men. The men in their lives were open to embracing East Indian cultural values and readily incorporated them into their lives. It appeared that Western values were almost placed in the background or on the periphery.

One dilemma encountered by several women in the context of their ethnic identity was how to be East Indian enough, particularly within their ethnic community. Being labelled as Canadian within their community implied a transgression and betrayal of ethnic loyalty. For example, one participant described how she was criticized for having White friends because this was perceived as a loss of her ethnic identification. Another participant described feeling disconnected from the community because she did not speak an East Indian dialect nor did she exclusively socialize and immerse herself in the community. Hence, the East Indian community perceived several behaviours as transgressions. Simultaneously, being perceived as "not Canadian enough" by mainstream society is another situation these women face. Many of them described

feeling that as a visible minority you are not perceived as being a real Canadian, this realization emerged in the face of repeated questions such as "Where are you really from?" or "How long have you been in Canada?" Therefore, communicating the clear message that being Canadian is synonymous with being White. Li (2003) supports this idea, stating that in Canadian society being non-white automatically results in being viewed as an outsider. An additional burden that comes with this perception is being labelled an "immigrant"; which carries an additional negative connotation and further marginalizes an individual. These two labels do not allow an ethnic minority individual "to be Canadian", because being Canadian is attributed to be being White. Szepesi (1994) describes the reality of this stigma as a woman of Hungarian ancestry. Although she is a seventh-generation Canadian, her name communicates the fact that she is ethnic and not Anglo-Saxon. As a result, she faces constant questions about her nationality, and therefore, is not allowed to be Canadian. The conclusion that can be drawn from these examples, and from participant's stories speaks to the lack of acceptance that continues to exist in Canadian society if you are a person of colour, possess a non-Anglo-Saxon name, and engage in cultural practices that differ from the dominant cultural norm. Although participant's firmly identified and grounded themselves in a Canadian identity and nationality, they nonetheless faced continual reminders that they would be perceived as "other", "foreigner", and "outsider".

Even though participants faced the challenge of other people's perceptions of their ethnic identity and perceived degree of acculturation or assimilation they were ultimately able to negotiate and create a congruent sense of their ethnic identification that represented their unique positioning as second-generation women.

Waters (1999) has asserted that the empirical research on the identities of the second-generation is sparse. She argued that understanding how the second-generation identify and situate themselves according to their ethnic identity becomes important in understanding how they will immerse themselves in the fabric of mainstream society. Water's research focused on second-generation West Indians in the United States, and she identified three types of identities for the second-generation that balances their racial and ethnic identity (a) ethnic, (b) immigrant, and (c) American. Ethnic-identified individuals, found it important to distinguish and clearly identify themselves, so as not to be mislabelled or confused with another ethnic group. Immigrant-identified referred to individuals who through their manner of dress or their accents, for example, clearly identified and signalled themselves as being foreign born. American-identified individuals did not see ethnic identity as an important part of their self-image; they tended to minimize their ethnic heritage. Overall, the participants in the current study could be classified under the general category of ethnic identified, because they did not disregard their heritage or cultural roots and recognized their cultural and racial distinctiveness. Waters (1999) reported that social class background affected the way in which individuals self-identify. She contends that ethnic identified individuals typically come from middle-class backgrounds. Therefore it is likely that their parents had a higher level of education and therefore lived in more integrated suburban neighbourhoods and were able to send their children to higher quality academic institutions. The social network of parents also influenced the type of identity the children developed. The social and economic class backgrounds of the women in the current study parallel the findings of Waters' study and their related ethnic identification.

It is important to note that although second-generation East Indian women may generally be described as ethnically identified, their social and immigration history is distinct from other ethnic groups, particularly African American or West Indians in the United States. Although East Indians may face racial discrimination, but they are also perceived to be a "model minority" and therefore do not face the same stereotypes and oppression as other racial groups.

Speculation about the identity choices and assimilation trajectory of ethnic immigrants has been an ongoing topic of discussion within the literature. Researchers who prescribe to a straight-line assimilationist perspective argue that the second-generation progressively loses its ethnic identity or foregoes this identity and subsequently adopts an American identity (Gans, 1992; Zhou, 1997a, 1997b). Whereas, a second group of researchers argues that the second-generation will hold on to its ethnic identity and emphasize its distinctiveness but will simultaneously counteract the negative stereotypes of their ethnic group (Waters, 1999). Finally, a third group of scholars argues that the second-generation will shift towards adopting a stronger racial identity, reject their parents' ethnicity, and adopt an American identity (Waters 1999).

The ethnic self-identification of participants in this study did not appear to fall clearly into any one specific category, but rather, it seemed to sit between the latter two perspectives. These women appear to continue to hold on to their East Indian ethnic identity and work towards counteracting negative stereotypes by educating others around them and serving as positive role models through their behaviour. However, there also appears to be a shift in their ethnic identity from that of their parents. First-generation immigrants, appear to hold stronger connection and identification with their country of

origin and its cultural values. Although second-generation individuals do not parallel this, their parent's identification serves as a strong foundation from which these women build their ethnic identity. They cannot forego their identification but have the ability to modify and adapt its expression.

Ho (1995) attributes this generational difference in terms of internalized culture, which he defines as " the cultural influences operating within the individual that shape (not determine) personality formation and various aspects of psychological functioning" (p. 5). He also contends that " differences in internalized culture arise from differences in enculturation" (p. 5) meaning, that individuals within the same cultural group (i.e., first and second generation immigrants) have been socialized differently and therefore have different internalized cultures. This becomes an important consideration in understanding the differences in ethnic identification between first and second-generation individuals. Second-generation women in this study appeared to be more flexible and adaptable in integrating Canadian values and attitudes into their lifestyle choices. In addition, the fact that their ethnic identification evolves over time, and shifts with age and life experiences, also supports the idea that identities are not fixed and static entities. The salience of retaining and maintaining one's ethnic identity and incorporating it into one's adult life further validates the importance that ethnicity holds in their lives. Struggling with deconstructing and reconstructing their identity suggests that they are not willing to completely abandon this dimension of themselves. In whole, these findings challenge the traditional assumptions put forth by the classical straight-line assimilationist perspective which argues that immigrants forego their ethnic and cultural values and behaviour in

favour of more North American attitudes and behaviour (Gans, 1992; Zhou, 1997a, 1997b).

Assimilation

The concept of assimilation is a popular construct in the multicultural literature and is often used to define how ethnic immigrant groups progressively integrate into a host culture and society. According to the traditional definition of assimilation, individuals progressively forego their ethnic heritage, values, and behaviour to adopt the values, attitudes, and behaviours of a host culture (Alba & Nee, 1997). Historically, this construct explains the progressive shift many ethnic groups and individuals made on immigration and describes the "melting pot" concept of assimilation. Assimilation refers to the expectation that immigrants comply with the cultural and normative standards of a host society; thereby abandoning their cultural distinctiveness (Li, 2003). However, it is important to note, that the mere outward adoption of characteristics such as social manners, language proficiency, and clothing is not an accurate measure of assimilation for many ethnic immigrants. Based on these aforementioned characteristics, an individual can appear acculturated or assimilated according to the dominant population, however, this does not automatically mean that they have abandoned the values from their culture of origin. Nor can it be assumed that they perceive themselves to be fully assimilated and acculturated (Berry, 2003). The importance of varying degrees of acculturated behaviour can be directly applied to understanding the behaviour and choices of women in this study. The importance of (a) retaining their ethnic identity (East-Indian-ness), (b) their self-identification as East Indian, and (c) their continual evaluation of their cultural

values, and positioning of their values in decision making, challenge the inherent notion of assimilation.

There are no universally accepted standards to benchmark integration and assimilation. We use terms like adaptation, acculturation, ethnic identity and ethnic survival as gauges. Each of these terms also refers to the process that immigrants experience as they establish themselves in a new country. Evaluating these acculturative processes requires passing a value judgement from an outsider's perspective. Hence, the concept of assimilation is problematic with respect to how it accounts and measures the degree or nature of assimilation for ethnic immigrants. Should assimilation be measured or defined according to an individual's perception or according to society's perception of what makes a person adequately assimilated? The questions that arise from the aforementioned discussion recapitulate debates in both the multicultural and feminist literature regarding who has the power to define another's experience. Espin (1995) articulates this within the notion of inclusion and the nature of knowledge stating that merely including women of colour in the feminist discourse is not sufficient, but rather their voices and subjectivity must define and describe their experience. She asserts that:

> Someone who does not see a pane of glass, does not know that she does not see it. Those who do not partake of that privilege, however, know very well the existence of that pane of glass…The non-privileged can be better "knowers" and more knowledgeable. Their vision tends to be clearer; they see themselves, they see the glass pane, and they know who is on the other side of that glass (p. 129).

This statement implies that the women of colour and less privileged groups need to be centralized in creating, defining and articulating their own experience. Historically, individuals from the dominant culture have held the exclusive power to make this decision, and the issue has yet to be resolved within the research literature.

The concept of assimilation is also problematic in terms of the implicit assumption it holds and conveys that in order to adequately assimilate an individual must forego on their culture of origin, values, attitudes, and traditions and adopt the more progressive ideals of the host culture. The inherent assumption in this position is that an individual's original values, ideals, attitudes are incongruent, and deficient in comparison to those of the host culture. Hence, in order to become more contemporary, it is necessary for them to assimilate and take on the worldview of the host culture.

It is important to note that ethnic immigrants can be understood as assimilating in very predictable ways in order to survive in a host culture; thereby, quickly learning social etiquette from the dominant culture. These are all external markers and superficial changes that can be accommodated easily to "fit and survive". However, they do not account for the internal shifts within the individual on a cultural values level, in this regard, this concept does not explain adequately the retention and maintenance of cultural values demonstrated by participants in this study.

Using the concept of assimilation to explain participants biculturalism or the fact that they have adopted certain North American values is inadequate to explain the behaviour and choices made by the women in this study. As a result, I have not used this concept in my discussion. This decision was based on the on the idea that assimilation defines and describes the behaviour of a minority group solely from a North American

perspective. Taking this position minimizes the complexities of the observed behaviour and simply compares and contrasts it to that of dominant cultures point of reference, not using the individuals' point of reference as a basis to frame our understanding. The fact that the majority of participants adopted some cultural behaviour (i.e., food, fashion, and behaviour) is a reasonable consequence of their social and cultural upbringing in Canadian society. Nonetheless, they continued to maintain a strong connection and identification with their cultural heritage and values. Although they did integrate their East Indian values with Canadian ones to create a hybrid cultural blend, it is important to realize that they did not forgo their ethnic self-identification as East Indian women, or the significance they placed on maintaining their ethnic identity and cultural values throughout the course of their lives and in the face of different personal circumstances.

Over the course of interviews several women described the importance their cultural values held in their self-definition, way of being, and functioning in the world. It informed fundamentally the way in which they constructed their lives. Their East Indian-ness was connected to their racial, cultural and ethnic identities. Creating a shift in terms of cultural identity does not automatically translate to a shift in racial or ethnic identity. Again, only the individual can ultimately decide who holds the power to determine which identity will be salient. Qualitative research is valuable as it attempts to address part of this question, by allowing subjective experience to be accounted for, recorded and documented by the individual.

Hybrid Identities (Multiple Identities)

The concept of hybrid identities or multiple identities has been discussed in a variety of contexts, postcolonial literature, identity and feminist literature. Bhabha's

(1990) discourse on cultural change, cultural difference and diversity addresses the concept of hybrid identities and the creation of a third space. He argues that the concept of identity is fluid and located across a range of contradictory social contexts. Furthermore, people exist with multiple identities and not within a singular context such as race, gender or social class. Hence, identity is constructed, and individuals exist in the form of multifaceted, multidimensional, and conflictual identities. He raises the idea of hybridity, which means the creation of a third space through cultural translation and asserts:

> The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "the third space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom...The process of hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (p. 211).

This concept relates to how an individual creates a unique space (a third space) from pre-existing dichotomous influences, merging them into a new identity; a hybrid identity. This idea very effectively connects to the experience of second-generation East Indian women in this study. The women's ethnic identity is initially influenced by their socialization in two cultural worlds. Because of their unique positioning and the influence of both these social and cultural worlds, they develop strategies of negotiating their differences to create a unique and individually representative hybrid identity. The

findings of this study suggest that second-generation women create a third space for themselves; displacing how others assign, position and locate their identity. The cultural third space and ethnic identity they define, and negotiate is uniquely their own. As Bhabha suggests, their identity gives rise to something new, a complex, translated and multifaceted identity.

Khan, (2002), applies this notion of third space and multiple identities as influencing Muslim female identity. The narratives of her participants' reveal similar phenomenon and conflicts voiced by the women in my study surrounding issues of distancing, self-identification and connection to their ethnic identity. Khan raises several notable issues and dilemmas in the context of her participants' lives, namely the idea of contradictions, the inferences of being positioned and labelled as a Muslim woman, and the multiple strategies women use to negotiate and position themselves within (and despite) their ethnic identity.

The women in this study can be understood from within a similar framework and through a similar lens; a lens, that depending on the angle at which it is positioned, reveals different dimensions of participants' lives and ethnic identity construction. Several themes in the current study centre on how participants are perceived and situated by others, and their internal struggle of defining and constructing their ethnic identity. Their personal process can be understood as continual attempts to position themselves within their multiple identities, thus allowing them to develop a congruent identification, in that "in-between place" which parallels Bhabha notion of hybridization.

The concept of multiple identities and the intersection of identities offers an overarching framework from which to understand the bicultural experience of second-

generation East Indian women in the prairie provinces of Canada. It offers a context from which to examine the cultural tensions that exist in their lives, the strategies they develop to negotiate those tensions and the congruence they strive to achieve. The multiple identities that these women possess includes variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, immigration history, age, language and social class. These identifiers also intersect in particular ways with respect to the specific ethnic community they come from. For example, participants in the study identified themselves as part of a Gujarati, Muslim, Malayalee, Ismaili, Parsee or Christian community, thus reflecting the tremendous diversity and heterogeneity that exists in the East Indian community at large.

Their identity is also informed and constructed by their second-generation status and bicultural status, which reflects a different experience then their first-generation parents or later generation counterparts. The research literature on identity models often presents identities as separate entities rather then as intersections or multiple identities (Fischer & Moradi, 2001; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991). In light of the conceptualizations of hybridity and the third space articulated by Bhabha (1990, 1994) and Khan (2002), it becomes necessary to open our conceptualizations of how overlapping and intersecting identities inform the lives of second-generation East Indian women.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions of the Researcher

Several assumptions have guided and informed this research inquiry. The founding premise of this research was based on the assumption that second-generation East Indian women in Canada constitute a unique subgroup within a larger visible ethnic community in Canada. The immigration history of the East Indian community in Canada parallels

some aspects of Asian settlement in Canada, but does not entirely correspond to the racial, social, or political history of other ethnic communities in this country. The experience of East Indian women as a subgroup also represents a unique context within the larger multicultural mosaic. A second assumption embedded in this statement includes the idea that second-generation East Indian women negotiate and navigate different social, cultural, and gendered contexts in comparison to their first-generation parents. Ho (1995) contends this is a function of their bi-enculturation and internalized culture. A third assumption inherent to this argument asserts that the reality of negotiating multiple social and cultural milieus creates explicit and implicit tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas in these women lives. Negotiating these tensions is a cause for deeper personal reflection, which evokes numerous identity questions and forces a deconstruction, reconstruction, and personal construction of their ethnic identity and cultural values.

In conclusion, the axiological assumptions of the research question and inquiry are also inherently influenced by my ethnicity, cultural background, and gender. I share a similar ethnic and cultural background with the participants in this study. Hence, my personal interest in the lives of East Indian women in Canada, particularly second-generation women, stems in part from my own bicultural status and identity. My professional interest in multicultural issues has emerged from witnessing the invisibility of East Indian women in the feminist, multicultural and counselling literature. This has often left me questioning why my experience as an ethnic minority woman is not represented in these domains of knowledge. My academic reading; training in feminist

and multicultural counselling; and work experience with ethnic minority women frames my interpretation and understanding of participants' narratives.

Ethnic Matching

The pros and cons of insider/outsider status, and ethnic matching are increasingly debated in the research literature (Archer, 2002; Bhopal, 2001; Rhodes, 1994). Some scholars would argue that my shared ethnicity with participants might negatively influence the outcome of my study, given the notion of researcher bias and my position as primary researcher. Key issues considered in the literature caution researchers about reproducing stereotypes of race, ethnicity, and culture in interviewing, and the positive and negative impact of ethnic matching and mixing. Participants' level of self-disclosure is linked to the aforementioned issues. Notter (2003) contends that the issue of ethnic mixing and matching is complex and does not offer a specific resolution. She suggests researchers attend to (a) power differentials, (b) use of language in the interview process, and (c) not assuming heterogeneity of a group. According to Notter, the positive aspects of ethnic matching include (a) participant's feeling safe and confident in sharing their experience, and (b) obtaining indepth descriptions and stories from participants. The disadvantage of ethnic matching is revealed by participant's assumption of tacit knowledge on the part of the researcher. Rhodes (1994) makes the statement that "most American studies agree that responses to items dealing directly with race attitudes to an interviewer of the opposite race are almost always more congenial than to one of the same race" (p. 549). Therefore, although Notter (2003) advises caution and attention on the part of a researcher with regard to ethnic matching, Rhodes (1994) contends that racial matching might be a significant factor in discussing race related issues with

participants. Ram (2002), discusses how she addressed the issue of ethnic and racial matching with participant's in her study. She states that sharing these characteristics with her participants forced her to constantly re-evaluate and questioning how her position as an academic situated and located her understanding. She also suggests that her positioning as a woman from the same ethnic community also assisted her access to participants and how participants perceived her.

I believe that my ethnic and racial status offered several advantages in interviewing participants (a) facilitating participants' disclosure of sensitive issues such as experiences of discrimination, racism, and cultural values conflicts, (b), enhancing my credibility and interest in my research topic, and (c) bringing a deeper appreciation to the issues raised by the women in the study. Several women in the study stated that they would not have felt as comfortable sharing personal aspects of their lives with a non-Indian woman or even a male researcher. These comments led me to believe that ethnic and racial matching is a significant consideration in any study and directly influences participant's perceptions of a researchers intentions, credibility, and consequently, participant's level of self disclosure. In addition, my experience of interviewing participants and the generosity they displayed in sharing their time was indicative of their comfort in being interviewed by an East Indian woman about issues salient to their lives. I remained attentive throughout the interview process to the assumption of tacit knowledge, and participant's comments such as "well you know what I mean" or "you know how it is". I made an effort to ask for clarification when these comments where made or follow-up on these comments at the end of the interview, thereby minimizing the effects of my tacit assumptions.

Limitations

As with all research, limitations of a study become more evident at the conclusion of a project. The following considerations may have enhanced the breadth and depth of the research findings. As a focused ethnography, individual interviews were the primary data collection tool. Using multiple data collection strategies (such as participant observation or multiple informants from within the East Indian community) could have offered additional perspectives and depth to the exploration of the phenomenon of biculturalism in participants' lives. However, given that the premise of my research question emphasized an emic based inquiry focusing on participants' lived cultural experience, using individual interviews as means of gaining insight into their experience was an effective data collection strategy. A second consideration is the open-ended research question that guided the inquiry, which allowed me to examine from a broad perspective the experiential dimensions of participants' bicultural experience as second-generation women. However, simultaneously it also left several areas open for future inquiry and follow-up, which will be discussed below in directions for future research. Finally, the level of self-disclosure of participants is always an issue for consideration in qualitative interview-based inquiries. Although participants appeared open, comfortable, and accommodating in sharing their time and personal stories, it cannot be stated with absolute certainty that there were no limits to their level of self-disclosure; I took measures to enhance self-disclosure (a) conducting interviews in participants' homes, (b) conducting follow-up interviews, and (c) using open-ended interview strategies. Nonetheless, level of disclosure remains a question for consideration given that the interview topic was of a personal nature.

Although the current project focused on examining the experience of the children of post-1965 East Indian immigrants and therefore focused on individuals within a specific socio-economic range and with a university education, several sampling issues are worthy of consideration for future research endeavours. These issues include (a) recruiting a larger sample of Muslim women in the sample pool, (b) extending the age range of participants to include women over 40 years of age, (c) including women from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and (d) examining the experience of East Indian women who grew up in more urban city centres. Although efforts were made to recruit women from a Muslim religious background, primarily through a snow balling technique; they produced minimal results. Consideration of these sampling issues in a future project might offer an additional dimension to the findings, and would help to construct a more vivid and multifaceted picture of East Indian Canadian women from all walks of life.

Concluding Summary

The findings of this study offer a broad picture of the bicultural experience of second-generation East Indian women. Their narratives offer an insight into the challenges they face (a) growing up in socially isolated communities, (b) as children gaining an awareness of their racial identity, (c) as adolescents who develop a stronger foundation in their ethnic identity, and (d) as visible ethnic minority women who struggled to deconstruct and reconstruct a personal sense of identification with their cultural values and ethnic identity. To an outside observer, their personal struggle might not be obvious. These women do not come from disadvantaged families, did not rebel outwardly, or display problematic behaviour socially or academically; and therefore, they appear to be successfully acculturated individuals. Nonetheless, from a young age, these

women struggle with identity issues in their day-to-day lives. Although an outsider may see them as being well assimilated and acculturated, there is an invisible process at work in their lives. This process centres on an endless and continuing agenda of negotiating, navigating, and constructing their ethnic identity. These women are active agents in their lives and their personal process highlights the fluid, dynamic, and complex nature of biculturalism. These women are not seeking to forgo or foreclose on their ethnic identity, but, rather they are attempting to find ways of integrating contradictory and overlapping identities. This negotiation implies a different process.

The women's experience is best described as an intersection of multiple identities rather than being viewed from a monocultural perspective, which regards identities as individual constructs. The concept of multiple identities ties into postmodern conceptions of identities as constructed, fluid, and evolving. No person lives and exists in a social or cultural vacuum; rather a multitude of social, cultural, and gendered variables that interact and intersect in our lives. As we come to different crossroads in our lives we are often faced with the challenge of revisiting issues. For women in this study, facing the issue of marriage and children metaphorically represented arriving at an intersection in their lives. This intersection or crossroad required them to decide which direction they would take, and to re-evaluate which aspects of their ethnic identity were most meaningful.

The women in this study represent a high-functioning cohort with several strengths. They are women who demonstrate resilience, competence, and flexibility in their ability to negotiate reoccurring situations that are associated with their visible ethnic minority status in Canadian society.

The past 30 years has brought a steadily increasing number of immigrants from South Asian countries to Canada. As a community of researchers, and mental health professionals, we need to develop our awareness of how second-generation East Indian women have integrated into the fabric of Canadian society.

Implications for Counselling

Counselling second-generation individuals from a collectivist oriented culture, such as India and Pakistan requires attention to the general principles underlying multicultural counselling. Jambunathan, Burts, and Pierce (2000), have described biculturalism as "a person's ability to function effectively in more than one culture and also to switch roles back and forth as the situation changes". This definition represents the experience of second-generation East Indian women who have been socialized into Canadian culture. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of their situational and multiple identities becomes an important consideration in working with this population.

Intersecting Identities

The subjectivity of their experience centres on the intersection of race, culture, ethnic, and gender issues. The way these variables can overlap and intersect in their lives offers insight into the complex negotiation of ethnic identity and cultural values.

The intersection of these variables is not unique to the experience of East Indian women, and can be applied to other groups of visible ethnic minority women. Specific considerations with respect to bicultural issues consists of an understanding and awareness of (a) cultural values conflicts between family, society, and the individual; (b) the inherent contradictions and paradoxes that emerge in integrating multiple identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and social class; (c) gender expectations and

responsibilities for East Indian women (i.e., limited freedom, family honour); (d) racial and cultural tensions that exist within and between Canadian society and the East Indian ethnic community; and (e) possessing an insider and outsider status.

Multicultural Competence

The literature on counselling ethnic minority individuals (Chandras, 1997; Das & Kemp, 1997; Lessinger, 1995; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Sue & Sue, 1999, 2003) raises our awareness to issues such as acculturation stress, cultural value conflicts, hierarchical relationships, collectivist orientations, racism and prejudice, and identity issues. Hence, the provision of culturally competent services requires a counsellor to become familiar with the specific issues of an ethnic community. For example, two participants who sought counselling services for life stressors, reported disappointment, frustration, and early termination due to their counsellor's lack of awareness regarding culturally salient issues in the East Indian culture and community. Specifically, they cited the counsellor's lack of understanding of religious practices, a collectivist orientation to family, and gender role expectations as contributing factors to early termination of counselling. Several multicultural researchers (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Sue, Zane, & Young, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1999) have argued that the under utilization of services by minority clients, and the premature termination of treatment is often the result of class-bound and culture-bound values of the therapist, resulting in a counsellor's inability to provide culturally responsive services. The value of multicultural competent service has been at the forefront of discussion and research in counselling for several years, yet it continues to be a critical issue if individuals of ethnic minority populations still do not receive culturally competent services.

To work effectively with second-generation East Indian individuals, it becomes critical for a counsellor to become aware of his/her own assumptions, biases, values, lifestyle, and cultural background with respect to East Indian clients (Chandras, 1997; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997; Sandhu, 1997). Becoming more knowledgeable about the diverse cultural, religious and social practices within the community is a first step in avoiding cultural encapsulation. Acknowledging this diversity, also demands an understanding of individual differences in terms of retention and maintenance of cultural norms, practices and values. As a counsellor, remaining attentive to stereotypes, assumptions and biases about the community are critical. For example, several women in the study cited racist stereotypes, such as "Does your father work at the seven eleven?, or Does he drive a cab?" as common assumptions that permeate society's attitude about the East Indian community. It is hoped that, a counsellor would not ask such questions, but these societal stereotypes can unconsciously inform our perception, expectations and attitudes about specific ethnic groups. Therefore, engaging in a self-reflexive process, and remaining critical about the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs we hold about the East Indian community, and East Indian women is critical. For example, not every Muslim woman wears a hajib, and represents North America's stereotypes about Islam, nor is she oppressed if she chooses to wear traditional clothes. By the same token, understanding some of the general characteristics of the East Indian community offers a starting point from which to ask culturally appropriate questions of clients and allow them to inform and educate a counsellor about the specific context of their lives, family and position in society.

Women in this study represented a group of high functioning, educated, and competent individuals who had developed effective strategies to negotiate the circumstances of their lives. The issues these women struggle with can be internal, culturally bound, and representative of cultural values conflicts. Although internal value conflicts emerged as a consistent theme in their lives, external factors such as discrimination and racism also represented stressors. When counselling women with complex, multifaceted, and intersecting identities, a culturally competent counsellor needs to be aware that issues of ethnic and race identity are situationally and subjectively located; thus, biculturalism involves shifting and dynamic constructions of identity.

To recapitulate, bicultural issues for second-generation women can include (a) intergenerational conflicts, (b) cultural values conflicts (dating/marriage; family expectations; gender role expectations; social relationships), (c) educational and occupational achievement, and (d) understanding the fluid and dynamic nature of their ethnic identity that has emerged from living in the margins of two cultural worlds.

Stigma of Counselling

Stigma surrounding seeking mental health services still exists in the East Indian community. Lessinger (1995, p. 132) frames this stigma as "Indian immigrants feel ashamed at having their shortcomings discussed among outsiders, pressure from concerned insiders is far more effective in changing attitudes and behaviours than the efforts of well intentioned non-Indians". The hesitation and shame about seeking mental health services might also be linked to wanting to avoid undermining the image of "model minority" that characterizes the East Indian community, or comprising a family's name and honour. This cautionary attitude might be more prevalent among first-

generation immigrants, however, second-generation women represent a group of educated, professional, financially autonomous women who might be more prone to seeking services for life stressors and personal issues due to their socialization and bicultural status. Given the issues mentioned previously, seeking support within their families may not be a viable option; particularly, if family issues constitute the main source of tension in their lives. However, families as a source of support and strength for these women should not be overlooked within the counselling context; since the majority of women in this study cited their families as role models and positive sources of support.

Ethnic Matching/Ethnic Mixing

The issue of ethnic matching and mixing is worthy of consideration when working with ethnic minority clients. The current debates in the literature articulate the potential advantages and disadvantages to either position, but do not offer a definitive conclusion (Archer 2002; Bhopal, 2001; Ram, 2002; Rhodes, 1994). The statements of two participants in this study exemplifies the reservations ethnic clients hold with respect to seeking therapy and counselling (i.e., that their cultural beliefs and values will not be validated or understood). Although ethnic matching can be helpful in some therapeutic interactions, it is impossible to ensure that an effective alliance will result due to the racial, ethnic or gender matching between a client and counsellor. My experience as a counsellor has demonstrated that ethnic matching can be beneficial in putting a client at ease in the counselling context and facilitate their self-disclosure; however it does not guarantee a values match on all levels with a client. Establishing a sound working alliance based on trust and mutual respect might be more directly related to the cultural competence, knowledge and awareness displayed by a counsellor. Atkinson (1983)

found that matched counsellor-client dyads have not been found to be more favourable then unmatched dyads. Walborn (1996) asserts that numerous variables such as the quality of the therapeutic relationship and client's expectations can affect the outcome of counselling, therefore, it cannot be reasonably assumed that all members of an ethnic, racial or cultural group will share similar values, attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, a critical factor in considering the issue of ethnic matching in the context of counselling might be linked to simply asking a client about their preference to be matched with a counsellor based on ethnic, racial or gender variables, rather than assuming that ethnic or racial matching will produce positive therapeutic outcomes. Peavy and Li (2003, p. 187) offer two convincing arguments on this issue (a) that successful intracultural counselling depends on how well the counsellor understands the social contextual factors that surround the interaction, and (b) that counselling is a collaborative process dependent upon how well a client and counsellor negotiate and communicate on process and content. Hence, these considerations seem to outweigh ethnic matching as a primary variable in the counselling process. As a researcher, ethnic matching offered several advantages in the context of this study. However, it is important to remember that ethnic matching does not ensure that a singular truth will be revealed by a participant, rather, ethnic matching and mixing may simply reveal different dimensions of a participant's experience.

Directions for Future Research

The current study revealed six broad themes that offered insight into the lives of second-generation East Indian women living in the prairie provinces. Given the open-ended nature of the research topic several questions and issues are evident for further inquiry. Further research could confirm and validate the themes and issues raised in the current inquiry. For example, reproducing the findings using a researcher of a different ethnic, academic and social background could enhance and substantiate the findings.

Examining the issue of biculturalism from the perspective of mother-daughter relationships would also extend the current findings. Mothers were identified as primary role models and sources of women's connection to their ethnic identity. Exploring the dynamics of this relationship, for example gaining insight into a mother's perception of her East Indian daughter's ethnic identity and cultural values shifts, or the shifts that occur from a first-generation woman's perspective would introduce an added dimension to our understanding of the ethnic identity of East Indian women in Canada (or North America). Exploring more comprehensively how ethnic identity shifts as a function of social class, education, and occupational choice are also considerations given that the sample pool in this study specifically focused on examining the experience of a select group of second-generation women.

Several unanswered questions emerged. First, the study did not reveal how ethnic identity and cultural values impacts educational and career choices for second-generation East Indian women given the value and status East Indian culture places on educational achievement. Educational and occupational achievement and success for children was an issue that was raised indirectly by several participants as a value embedded in the cultural

psyche of the East Indian community. It is also an issue that has been noted in the research literature relative to different ethnic groups (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Portes, 1997; Sue & Sue, 2003); however, it has not been examined extensively relative to the East Indian community in North America.

Second, it would be interesting to examine how married women negotiate the ethnic identity and transmission of cultural values to their third-generation children, particularly biracial children. Several women in the study commented on the significance of retaining and maintaining their cultural values, practices, and ethnic identity in the context of marriage and in raising their future children. Conducting a follow-up investigation with these women in 5 years or examining this issue relative to another cohort would contribute to clarifying the evolution of ethnic identity development in the East Indian community. Give that a specific model of ethnic identity development does not exist to explain their process of identification, examining this process relative to several generational levels might be a starting point for theory development.

Third, structuring a longitudinal study to follow participants over several years to examine the evolution of their bicultural development, ethnic identity, and cultural values and the different challenges they face as mature women would contribute to enhancing the current findings. It would also contribute to identifying how East Indian women continue to negotiate their place in Canadian society. Developing a multifaceted picture of the East Indian community in Canada (not only prairie provinces) would lend to gaining a better understanding of how they are integrating into the multicultural mosaic and fabric of Canadian society.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information Sheet

Appendix A

Demographic Information Sheet

Please answer all of the following questions. All the information obtained on this form will remain confidential and will be used to describe the group of participants in the final analysis of the study. Please fill in the blanks and/or check the appropriate response as it pertains to your situation. Please leave the question blank if you do not wish to provide a response.

I. PERSONAL

1. Name: _____

2. Year of birth: _____

3. Civil/Marital Status?

Married _____Single _____ Divorced _____ Separated_____ Cohabitating _____

4. Do you have any children: Yes_____ No _____ (# of children: _____)

5. In which religion/faith were you raised? _____

6. What (if any) is your current religious affiliation? _____

7. Is your immediate family in Canada? Yes _____, No _____

8. Do you speak any languages other than English? Yes _____, No_____

Please specify: _____

Do you read, write, speak or comprehend these languages? Please Specify

_____

Mailing address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

II. IMMIGRATION HISTORY

1. From which country did your family immigrate to Canada?

Please specify_____

2. If your family immigrated from a country other than India, how long has your family been away from India? _____

3. Region of India your family is from?

_____

4. In what year did your family immigrate to Canada? _____

5. A) Country you were born in: _____

   B) If you were born outside of Canada, how old were you when you arrived in the Canada: _____ months/year

6. How do you choose to label your ethnicity?

   Please specify? _____

7. Do you currently have family or extended family in India? Yes _____ No _____

8. Have you visited India? Yes _____ No_____

   If yes, how often do you visit India: _____

III. EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

1. Highest level of education you have completed

   College (completed) _____

   Bachelor's degree (specify) _____

   Master's degree (specify) _____

   Ph.D./M.D. degree _____

   Professional/Technical Degree _____

   Other (specify) _____

2. What (if any) part of your education was completed in another country

   Please specify_____

3. Education level of your parents:

_____

_____

IV. OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY:

1. Your socio-economic status:

Income Range

0-10,000 _____

10,000-20,000 _____

20,000-30,000 _____

30,000-40,000 _____

40,000-50,000 _____

Other _____

In which social class (socio-economic status) were you raised?

_____

Which social class (socio-economic status) do you currently place yourself in?

_____

2. Parent's occupations? (Please specify)

_____

_____

3. Your Employment Status (please circle appropriate category)

   a) Full time (35 hours per week or more)

   b) Part time (less than 35 hours per week)

   c) Unemployed

4. If you are currently employed, what work do you do? _____

5. Length of time in your current occupation: _____

Appendix B

Consent Form

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Principle Investigator: Monica Justin
Doctoral Candidate in Counselling Psychology – McGill University

I understand that I am being invited to participate in a doctoral dissertation study that intends to explore the bicultural experience and ethnic identity of second-generation South Asian Indian women between the ages of 20 and 40 years in the context of their personal and professional lives. This study will assist the researcher in: a) understanding how second-generation Indian women define their ethnic identity, and b) examining the challenges of living a bicultural experience. Furthermore, this study will contribute to developing multicultural competent counselling interventions that focus on the specific ethnic and cultural context of second-generation Indian women in Canada.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in the aforementioned study. I understand that Monica Justin is a senior doctoral candidate in the Department of Counselling Psychology at McGill University (Montreal) and is conducting this research as a requirement for the completion of her Ph.D.

I am aware that by taking part in this study I will have the opportunity to talk about my personal experiences which may give me the chance to reflect on my experiences and to understand myself better. I am aware that my participation in this study will include: a) filling out a consent and demographic form, b) being interviewed in two separate sessions (60 to 90 minutes in duration), and c) being asked to offer feedback on the interview process and my transcribed interview.

I understand that the personal information I provide in the context of this study will be treated confidentially and my anonymity will be preserved. This means that any identifying information about me will be replaced by numerical codes in the transcription of audiotapes and in the data analysis process. I am aware that all personal information about me will be kept in separate files, independent of transcripts and other working material. I understand that only Monica Justin will have access to my personal file and information and that all personal information and audiotapes will be destroyed after one year from the completion of this study.

I am also aware that the results of this study may be disseminated through presentations, papers and professional conferences during the final preparation of the dissertation.

While there are unforeseen risks in all types of research, I understand that there are minimal risks associated with my participation in this study. I understand that if my participation in this study causes any stress or if I wish to continue exploring personal issues – that I will be given appropriate referrals for counselling services.

I am also aware that the results of this study may be disseminated through presentations, papers and professional conferences during the final preparation of the dissertation.

While there are unforeseen risks in all types of research, I understand that there are minimal risks associated with my participation in this study. I understand that if my participation in this study causes any stress or if I wish to continue exploring personal issues – that I will be given appropriate referrals for counselling services.

In conclusion, I understand that I may freely withdraw my consent at any time during the course of this study without prejudice or penalty. I may also contact Monica Justin with any questions or concerns about this study or McGill University's Ethics Review. I have carefully read the information contained in this document and understand the purpose and procedures of my participation in this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C
Ethics Approval – McGill University

Appendix D
Ethics Approval - University of Calgary