

THE MULTI-IDENTITIES OF CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF SOUTH  
ASIAN HERITAGE

by

PRIYA BINNING

B.A., University of British Columbia, 2002  
B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2005

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Teaching English as a Second Language)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

September 2010

© Priya Binning, 2010

## **Abstract**

This study examined the notions of culture and identity held by high school students, of mainly Punjabi descent, in a Punjabi 11 class as realized through their completion of a unit designed to allow them to learn about themselves and their attitudes and beliefs regarding what comprised their culture. Data was collected through a unit of study created to allow the students to explore their identities and included student journals, reflections and final projects and presentations. The findings suggest that while the students identified themselves as Canadian, a Canadian identity often appeared to be second to their ethnic or religious identity (such as being Punjabi or Sikh). What came to the forefront is that Punjabi students see themselves as having a unique cultural identity that they share with other students of similar backgrounds. For many, this essential group identity creates the foundation for their social networks.

Two of the main factors that create this group identity appear to be religion and culture, both of which are taught at home by the family, supported by Punjabi media and validated by their friends at school. The expectations placed upon the participants by family are accepted and not often questioned and are instead considered to be duties that need to be fulfilled. Moreover, religion and culture are terms that appear, for some, to be interchangeable for many of the participants in this study and this does not pose a problem for them or their identities. There are also elements of being Punjabi and being Canadian that could be interpreted as being conflictual but are not perceived as such by the students, such as wanting to maintain traditional gender roles and marriage practices while also embracing the independence and freedom to choose your own path that comes with being Canadian.

This study contributes to our understanding of adolescent Indo-Canadians by exploring what their notions of identity are and how they see themselves, within their social groups, school community and at home. Future research should be focused on a larger, more diverse population of Indo-Canadian teenagers to concretely substantiate the ideas presented in this study.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
Dedication .....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Students and Teacher .....	4
1.3 Research Questions .....	7
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	7
1.5 Organization of the Thesis .....	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	10
2.1 Identity: Investment and Imagined Communities .....	10
2.2 Heritage Language Research in Canada .....	14
2.3 Biculturalism and Bilingualism .....	18
2.4 South Asian Diaspora .....	21
Chapter Three: Methodology .....	32
3.1 Introduction .....	32
3.2 The Site and the Participants .....	33
3.3 Data Collection Methods .....	36
3.4 The Design of the Identity Unit .....	39
3.5 Data Analysis .....	43
3.6 Trustworthiness of Inquiry .....	45
Chapter 4: Reporting of the Findings .....	46
4.1 Punjabi/Canadian .....	46
4.2 Sikh Religion and Punjabi Culture .....	50
4.3 Punjabi Language .....	58
4.4 Group Identities .....	61
4.5 Gender Differences and the Role of the Family .....	67
4.6 Individual Identities .....	74
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications .....	82
5.1 Discussion of the Findings .....	82
5.2 Limitations of the Study .....	96
5.3 Implications for Pedagogy .....	96
5.4 Directions for Future Research .....	97
5.5 Final Comments .....	99
References .....	100

Appendix A: Certificate of Approval .....	104
Appendix B: School District Letter of Approval .....	105
Appendix C: Student Consent Form .....	106
Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Consent Form .....	110
Appendix E: Publication Consent Form .....	114
Appendix F: Information Flyer .....	116

**List of Tables**

Table 3.1	Participants in the study by gender .....	36
Table 3.2	Data collection methods .....	37

## List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Image taken from Harnit's identity project .....	49
Figure 4.2 Image taken from Harjit's identity project .....	53
Figure 4.3 Image taken from Mandeep's identity project .....	56
Figure 4.4 Image #2 taken from Mandeep's identity project .....	56
Figure 4.5 Image taken from Ranjot's identity project .....	57
Figure 4.6 Image taken from Harvir's identity project .....	59
Figure 4.7 Image #2 taken from Harvir's identity project .....	60
Figure 4.8 Image taken from Sanam's identity project .....	73
Figure 4.9 Image taken from Kuljit's identity project .....	75
Figure 4.10 Image #2 taken from Harjit's identity project .....	76
Figure 4.11 Image #3 taken from Mandeep's identity project .....	77
Figure 4.12 Image taken from Sanjiv's identity project .....	78
Figure 4.13 Image #2 taken from Sanjiv's identity project .....	78
Figure 4.14 Image taken from Parveen's identity project .....	80
Figure 4.15 Image #3 taken from Harjit's identity project .....	81

## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of people.

First, I am grateful to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Margaret Early, who has guided and supported me since I first began this endeavour. I appreciate all the kind words of encouragement and advice that you have given me and I thank you for your patience and understanding.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ryuko Kubota and Dr. Bonny Norton for being a part of my supervising committee. I am sincerely thankful for all of the feedback and suggestions you have provided me with.

I could not have completed this thesis and graduate school without the love, support and guidance of my family. To my parents, Sadhu and Jagdish, who have always inspired me, taken care of me and reminded me of what is important in life, everything I have achieved in my life has been possible because of you. To Manish, my husband, whose unwavering support and understanding were vital in my returning to school and achieving the goals I set for myself. To my older brother Preet, thank you for caring and for all of the talks that we had about my research and life. To Rosy, Monica, Manakshi, and Ayesha, I could not have asked for better sisters, thank you so much for accepting me for who I am. And to my in-laws, Dave and Sharda, your encouragement has been overwhelming and I will always be grateful for it.

Thank you to the Burnaby School District for allowing me to carry out my project, and to my colleagues whose support and knowledge have aided me since I began my studies.

And lastly, to my Punjabi class. Thank you so much for participating in this research. We spent two years together and I have learned so much from you. I will carry the experiences and lessons that we shared with me always.

Dedicated to my grandparents:

ਆਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਹੋਤਾ (ਸਵਰਗਵਾਸੀ) Assa Singh Sihota,

ਜੀਤੋ ਕੌਰ ਸਹੋਤਾ Jeto Kaur Sihota,

ਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਿਨਿੰਗ (ਸਵਰਗਵਾਸੀ) Jit Singh Binning,

ਗੁਰਮੇਜ ਕੌਰ ਬਿਨਿੰਗ Gurmej Kaur Binning

who left India and everything they knew and loved  
to move to Canada to give their families a better life.

Thank you.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

*As a kid, I lived in India for about 5 years. Those memories and what India taught me in that time is what makes up most of my childhood. I was taught discipline, manners and obedience while I lived there and that represents a large portion of how I act and respond now. I was born in Canada and that makes me a Canadian, I feel a strong sense of pride in being a Canadian and living here most my life has taught me to be independent, and more caring in general. (Harjit, Identity project)*

### **1.1 Background**

Multiculturalism is synonymous with Canada, and Canadians take great pride in being able to maintain their heritage cultures while living happily within Canadian society. Being able to successfully transverse between cultures and allow different aspects of oneself to take prominence depending on the situation is something that is very common in immigrant families. However, what those different aspects or multi-identities are is largely unknown and unexplored.

An example of a population that moves across cultures is the South Asian Diaspora in Canada. Immigration from India, mainly from the province of Punjab, has been occurring for over 100 years; however it has intensified in the past 50 years (Statistics Canada, 2006). In Greater Vancouver a recent census revealed that of the 2,098,000 people living in the Vancouver metropolitan area, foreign-born people accounted for 39.6% of the population and 12.4% of them were born in India (Statistics Canada, 2006). Yet for such a large number of immigrants, little is known about how they have adjusted to life in a country so unlike their home country.

Traditional Punjabi culture is significantly different from mainstream Canadian culture and many of the values that are of importance in one culture do not necessarily share the same importance in the other (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998; Kalsi, 2003; Somerville, 2008; Smythe & Toohey, 2009). For example, although familial relationships are important in both Canadian and Punjabi cultures, in the Punjabi culture, ties with extended family are extensively maintained while Canadian culture emphasizes the nuclear family (Kalsi, 2003). In Punjabi culture, it is common for multiple generations to live together under one roof, and the distinctions between first and second cousins to be blurred and not as important as in Canadian culture (Smythe & Toohey, 2009). Punjabi culture reinforces the importance of family and that interdependence fosters the family bonds that ensure that families will stay together and take care of each other in the future (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998). Canadian culture can be seen as more individualistic, although it is difficult to define since there is such an amalgam of cultures that have helped to create what it is perceived to be Canadian culture. However, the conflict between two cultures where one values interdependence and the other leans towards independence suggest that Punjabi children growing up in Canada will have to negotiate their identities in some way to deal with such conflicts within the two cultures that they exist in.

Most South Asians born in Canada must balance two cultures. Their family connections tie them to the culture of their ancestors while by the very nature of where they live, they must face and adjust to the world that exists outside their homes (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998, Somerville, 2008). Issues of language, identity and culture are arguably bound to be understood and handled differently by the second and third

generations as opposed to the first generation (their parents), who, through a sense of agency perhaps, were better positioned to navigate through an unknown culture while still staying close to their culture and the values associated with it (Somerville, 2008).

First generation Punjabis living in Canada, who immigrated for a variety of reasons, at least were able to establish their identities in Punjab and have an understanding of how beneficial the Punjabi way of life is before moving to Canada to start their new lives (Rangaswamy, 2005). Second and third generation Punjabis did not get to choose to immigrate, but instead found themselves born into families that were living in Canada while maintaining the Punjabi culture. Their struggles to adjust to a particular way at home and another at school have been documented somewhat but have also changed dramatically in the past 10 years, as more and more second generation Punjabis are having children and influencing the way that they, as well as their cousins, nieces and nephews, are raised (Kalsi, 2003). Yet what are the effects of this new era on Punjabi youth that are trying to define themselves, living in bicultural worlds and attempting to develop and maintain their heritage language and culture, Punjabi?

By undertaking an exploratory study of South Asian students studying Punjabi as their second language in high school, an understanding of what their perceived identities are may be revealed. To understand how these students define themselves and to learn about what factors go into the formation of creating their identity will potentially provide insights into how students seem to be able to go back and forth between identities that may otherwise seem incompatible (Kalsi, 2003; Somerville, 2008). What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home? And what factors figure prominently in the constructions of their

identity? As well, by studying this particular group of students, we can learn what motivated them to take Punjabi and see if learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?

## **1.2 Students and Teacher**

The students in this study all voluntarily chose to take Punjabi and were in their second year of study at the grade 11 level. The class had potential for these students not just as a site for learning Punjabi but also as a forum for exploring what it means to be of South Asian heritage. To attest to this, the students often asked to share stories and experiences with the class that they said they could not share in their other classes or that other students would not understand. What makes this even more interesting is that the class of fifteen can be divided up into two groups that were friends outside of class. All of the girls were quite close to one another and the boys were inseparable, although their group of friends was much larger than the ones taking the class. Between the boys and girls there were friendships but they choose to not work together, rather preferring to erroneously claim that they are not allowed to sit or work with students of the opposite sex as a means of acknowledging the traditional expectations many of their older relatives still believe in and try to pass down to them.

The study focused on the students examining their own cultural and linguistic landscape through a class unit and creating multi-modal texts that revealed their findings. The assignments and project, which are part of the Punjabi 11 curriculum, sought to illuminate how students articulate their identities, as well as understanding what different identities they have. What they produced within the unit became the data through which

the analysis of their opinions and thoughts occurred.

I have spent 21 of my 28 years as a student, and an additional 5 years as a teacher within the Burnaby school system. I have a B.A. in English Language with a minor in Asian Studies. As well, I have additional courses in English Literature, a post-baccalaureate diploma in Communications and an Education degree. Currently, I am completing graduate studies in Teaching ESL. As a teacher, I am continuously taking advantage of professional growth opportunities within my district and have taken courses in areas such as Functional Grammar, Restitution, Tribes, and leadership. Education and continued learning has played a major and prominent role in my life and continues to do so.

After completing my Education degree, I was hired by the Burnaby school board and immediately got a job teaching high school English, Social Studies and ESL that I still continue to teach. However, last year I took on the job of also teaching 2 classes of Punjabi to a group of students that were predominantly of Punjabi ancestry and wanting to learn how to read and write the language of their parents home countries, since most could already understand spoken Punjabi, if not speak it as well. When accepting this new position, I didn't contemplate how teaching Punjabi would evoke so many questions about the notions of identity and culture that were present in my classroom for myself, and it seems, for my students.

My parents and their families emigrated from India in the early 60s and completed high school in Vancouver. Married in the early 70s, my mother worked while my father worked part-time and completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees part-time. By the mid-80s, my father completed his studies and was hired by UBC as a

sessional instructor of Punjabi. It was in this environment of hard work and academia that I was raised and continue to exist in today.

As a Canadian of Indian descent, I am a visible minority and have spent many years negotiating how my heritage fits in with my being Canadian. Through an understanding of both cultures, I have slowly made my own unique bridge between who I am and where I come from. From studying the history of Indians in both Canada and the world, to learning Punjabi (and subsequently teaching it) to understanding the aspects of Indian culture that I feel do not represent me and rejecting much of mainstream Punjabi culture, my battle with my ethnicity has helped to define the person I am today. Yet there is a part of me that feels left out of both Canadian and Punjabi culture because I wasn't choosing one, and instead creating my own hybrid culture. This same negotiation process I went through is similar to the one I see my Punjabi students dealing with yet their experiences and struggles do not necessarily shadow mine and it was this site of negotiation that the research sought to address. While planning the unit of study and analyzing the subsequent data, my own subjectivities as a Punjabi and as the classroom teacher were continuously examined to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

My upbringing has enabled me to understand that maintaining my culture and having a connection with my heritage is as much my own responsibility after my formative years, as it was my family's during them. I believe that forming and keeping a connection with my culture is key in maintaining my heritage language, however, this is easier said than done. As a teacher of Punjabi, it is this view of heritage languages that guides my practice and underscores what I teach in the language classroom.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

As previously stated, the main purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the identities of Canadian born Punjabi students and the diverse elements of those complex identities, including the conflicting nature of some Indian and Canadian values and the role of their heritage language, Punjabi. Based on this interest, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home?
2. What factors figure prominently in the constructions of their identity?
3. Does learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because adolescent Punjabi Canadians have not been the focus of very many studies in the past. There have been studies looking at elementary school age Punjabi Canadians as well as adults, including educators and parents. These participants all perceive learning Punjabi as an important way to maintain their heritage language and culture and this study seeks to understand the complexities of their identities, as they try to define who they are, incorporating aspects of both Punjabi and Canadian culture, often times seamlessly and with minimal conflict. Through this study, we seek to gain an understanding of the different threads that come together to construct the unique and informative identities of Punjabi Canadian teenagers in a suburban Canadian high school.

Many members of minority groups tend to gravitate towards each other in their adolescence without often being able to explain why, this study found valid reasons for why some students do want and need Punjabi peer groups and others do not, or do not need to rely on them exclusively. The participants painted a picture of their lives which leads one down a path to understanding how family, friends, goals and their understandings of their culture, heritage and religion all intersect together to help them define who they are.

For the students in this study, many components of their religion and culture are interchangeable, and their ability to navigate through both Canadian and Punjabi culture helps them naturalize aspects of their heritage that may otherwise be incompatible. Through an examination of their beliefs and understandings of their ethnic roots, a clearer, comprehensive portrait of their notions about religion and culture are revealed.

This thesis seeks to create support for further study of how both similar and different groups of Indo-Canadian youth, including those who do not elect to study Punjabi as a heritage language, negotiate their complex identities. As well, it provides the basis for dialogues towards mutual understanding between and within schools and the community for Indo-Canadian adolescents, their parents and their educators.

### **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

The second chapter of the thesis is the literature review. It is divided into four main areas. The first is an overview of the major theories that are the basis for this study such as imagined communities and the linguistic landscape. This leads into a deeper description of research regarding identity, especially multilingual learners in a Canadian

context. Then there is an examination of studies done in heritage language maintenance, with a focus on schools and students similar to those in this study. Finally, the South Asian diaspora is reviewed in an effort to provide insight into the community that the students and their families are a part of, in addition to being part of mainstream Canadian culture. As well, there is an overview of several key concepts relevant to the study, such as the Indian caste system and Sikhism.

The third chapter describes how data was collected for the study and includes information about the project itself, as well as the students that are participating in the study. It also discusses the different types of data gathered from the students and the method of analysis also provides commentary on the trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

Chapter four presents the major findings of the study. Some of the different themes that emerged from an analysis of the data included the role of the family in identity formation, the differences between males and females, the group identities created by Punjabi teens, as well issues regarding Punjabi language, Punjabi culture, Canadian culture, and the Sikh religion. There was also a focus on looking at the participant's individual identities as well.

The final chapter is where I discuss my findings and provide implications for theory, pedagogy and research. The student's journals, their identity projects and the classroom discussions are further interpreted using the themes discussed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Identity: Investment and Imagined Communities

Heritage language learning and maintenance is intrinsically tied into the learner's notions of identity and their desire to retain an aspect of their culture that would be otherwise lost to them, along with their mother tongue. Norton (2000) uses the term identity to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. She argues that identity needs to be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day to day social interaction. According to Norton, identity is constantly changing and negotiated through a person's interactions with the world around them. As well, since a person can negotiate different identities in different settings and in different relationships, it is easier to think of an individual as having multiple identities rather than one rigid, static identity.

Norton's (2005) discussion of identity, language learning and critical pedagogies is rooted in the idea that language is as much about social relationships as it is about linguistic systems. An important aspect of Norton's text is that in learning, relationships are not often equal (especially between teacher and student) and that makes such relationships critical for the understanding of how language is acquired. If a teacher is unaware of her student's backgrounds or life experiences, it will be difficult to make meaningful connections to the student within the classroom. Norton's concepts of investment and imagined communities expand and develop the general idea of motivation and offer an explanation that can help to explain why some people choose to study their heritage language while others do not. Norton (2005) defines investment as "the socially

and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” where “learners invest in the target language ... with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources” (p. 47). Investment allows one to see the student in an entirely different way than motivation does and to understand that the actions and behaviours of students extend way beyond the classroom. The fact that the learner’s own identity is tied up in their investment within learning a particular language speaks volumes to the sense of success and failure that the students connect to their progress within the target language. This concept of investment is directly tied to the idea of an identity that is fluid, not fixed. When one decides to learn their heritage language, they are mentally placing themselves in an imagined community where knowledge of that heritage language will allow them to achieve their goals and desires. These issues of identity need to be considered as part of classroom practice in a heritage language classroom, and in order for that to happen, meaningful communication must exist between teachers and students.

The notion of “imagined” communities presented by Norton (2005) provides a framework within which to understand the motivations of heritage language learners. An imagined community, as described by Norton (2005), is a “desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (p. 48). When the needs of the learner are met, it encourages continued investment in the target language since the imagined community is still attainable. However, when the imagined community fails to materialize or is not how the learner imagined it would be, investment falters and the learner begins to doubt him/herself. For a comprehensive review of the literature regarding imagined communities and identity, see Pavlenko and Norton (2007).

The concept of an imagined community can also be seen in Tatum's (1997) ideas regarding the creation of an oppositional identity. She states that "the search for personal identity that intensifies in adolescence can involve several dimensions of an adolescent's life: vocational plans, religious beliefs, values and preferences, political affiliations and beliefs, gender roles, and ethnic identities" and moreover "given the impact of dominant and subordinate status, it is not surprising that adolescents of color are more likely to be actively engaged in an exploration of their racial or ethnic identity than are White adolescents" (Tatum, 1997, p. 214). As minority students become more aware of their racial and ethnic differences from the mainstream, White "norm", many begin to develop an oppositional identity, resulting in self-segregation. The students are beginning to encounter situations where their race is being used to stereotype or impose on them negative and essentialized identities and they are resentful for it. While some of these experiences may be explicit, many are subtle and hard to explain to others who are not in the same predicament and unable to empathize. They start wondering about what it means to be visibly different, and what their identities are. Tatum (1997) suggests that this is part of the reason why "the Black students turn to each other for the much needed support they are not likely to find anywhere else" and they seek answers from their "peer group, the kids in the cafeteria, who hold the answers to these questions (p. 217). The self-segregation or oppositional identity both protect their "identity from the psychological assault of racism and keeps the dominant group at a distance" and they embrace and highly value "certain styles of speech, dress, and music ... while attitudes and behaviours associated with Whites are viewed with disdain" (Tatum, 1997, p.218). The point that Tatum makes that is unsettling is that notice is taken when minorities

group together and the view is not often positive, instead it is viewed as negative or threatening by school administrators and teachers, but they and the majority of society do not comprehend that “racial grouping is a developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism. Joining with one’s peers for support in the face of stress is a positive coping strategy” (Tatum, 1997, p.218). This is a radical way of looking at the social groupings of minority teens in high schools.

The final point that Tatum makes that is relevant to this study is the issue of social isolation if there is a lack of same minority peer groups for teens because:

As one’s awareness of the daily challenges of living in a racist society increase, it is immensely helpful to be able to share one’s experience with others who have lived it. Even when White friends are willing and able to listen and bear witness to one’s struggles, they cannot really share the experience (Tatum, 1997, p. 222).

This lack of ability to share one’s experiences or explain the unexplainable gets to the essence of why many minorities choose to be friends with others from the same race or ethnicity as themselves.

Giampapa (2001) studied Italian-Canadian youth to understand how the youth used language to negotiate their multiple and shifting identities, and found that the notion of identity for these youth was fluid and varied. A key finding of the study was the important role that language plays in forming their identities, especially how that language is used with one’s peers, and that by code switching and mixing the different languages and dialects available to the youth, they are able to assert and define themselves in a variety of ways, depending on who they are communicating with and what aspect of their identity they wish to convey. Giampapa (2001) asserts that Italian-

Canadian youth have access to multiple identities at any given time, and those identities are not static, and instead are continuously evolving, in order to fulfill whatever niche the individual desires to be, or to gain access into whichever imagined community they are trying to be a part of at that moment.

The South Asian diaspora and the Punjabi community/culture that exists in regions such as the Lower Mainland can also be seen as imagined communities, where a limited membership is granted at birth/arrival to the area and according to the decisions made throughout one's life, full membership is achieved or lost. One way to gain full membership is to maintain close connections to one's culture and to continue to use Punjabi as a means of communicating and expressing yourself.

## **2.2 Heritage Language Research in Canada**

This section deals with heritage language learners and speakers and the efforts that go into learning and maintaining their heritage languages. The studies focus not only on the heritage language learners but the role that their parents play in their family language acquisition. This area is important to study since Canada is a multicultural country comprised mostly of immigrants whose children often have a family or heritage language other than English. In modern times, with so many resources available to learn languages, the role that heritage languages play in the formation of identity and the attitudes of the speakers towards those languages is essential to understand how and why some speakers maintain their heritage languages while others lose them.

In examining ethnic identity and heritage language maintenance, Chow (2001) frames his study by positing that:

language represents a central aspect of identity and culture ... Language, through permitting interpretation and evaluation of the world, constructs the notion of “group.” It is precisely those shared evaluations of the world, reached through and communicated by language, that form the core of the bonds to others that structure our lives. (p.4).

In this sense, maintaining one’s heritage language is a way to keep and strengthen the bonds with their minority group amongst a larger majority group. Research findings suggest that heritage language retention is most successful when speakers have daily opportunities to use their heritage language, the frequency with which the language is used at home, as well as the ethnicity of the neighbourhood, the ethnicity of friends, and potential marriage partners (Chow, 2001). Chow asserts that heritage language development and maintenance promotes group cohesion and ethnic rediscovery without any loss of proficiency in the speaker's first language but heritage language loss can result in diminished ethnic identification and lack of academic success. While retaining a heritage language is positive, there is a lack of research to show what the effect is on “self identification and ethnic and racial preference. In other words, studies should be undertaken to more clearly establish the dynamic between language and self-identity” (Chow, 2001, p.10). This lack of research is troubling given the benefits and importance of developing and retaining your heritage language and more work needs to be done in the area to improve our understanding of what the positive effects are.

There has been some development in heritage language research but the statistics suggest that more attention and resources needs to be allotted for the support of language education other than English and French in Canada (Duff & Li, 2009). According to Duff

and Li's (2009) article, since 20 percent of Canada's population mother tongue is not English or French, it is not surprising that heritage language maintenance is an issue, especially for those who are represented by that statistic and the government has been slow to act towards this need for change.

Guardado (2009) stresses the need for the implementation of the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act, which was created in 1991. In British Columbia, access to heritage language education is provided for by the provincial government through secondary schools, universities or small, localized initiatives (Guardado, 2009). And, with the exception of the diversity of languages offered in universities, this pertains mainly to languages that have communities large and cohesive enough to gather support for the creation and implementation of language programs in their communities, such as Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, German and Punjabi.

In light of the difficulties of gaining access to heritage language education, research into heritage language maintenance is vital. As Guardado (2009) states:

A pressing research issue in immigrant receiving societies, or societies with local linguistic minorities, is the need to better understand how families, communities, and governments deal with HLs and cultures in light of local and broader goals and forces, including language ideologies. (p.103)

And the research that does exist on the various heritage languages and their maintenance practices suggest varied and diverse approaches to education and the retention of those languages. Guardado (2009) found that parents are essential to the success of their children's use of Spanish, both in the home and socially, as studied within their Scout group. The parents created situations where their children could use Spanish in a variety

of situations, with a range of different people, both peers and adults, in order to give their children an opportunity to use different registers of Spanish as well. He also discussed the need for children's agency in order for their heritage language development to be successful (Guardado, 2009). The children need to internalize a need or desire of their own, whatever that may be, so as to maintain their heritage language or else attempts to learn will be superficial and not long lasting.

Chumak-Horbatsch (1999) studied the connection between identity and heritage language development looking specifically at Ukrainian-speaking families. The findings suggested that despite exposure to Ukrainian both at home and in school, the Ukrainian children did not readily accept a Ukrainian identity, possibly reacting to and rejecting what they perceived to be an imposition of a language and culture that they were never given a choice of deciding to participate in. The parents desire to have their children retain their Ukrainian heritage was not shared by their children and instead led to feelings of resentment not acceptance of their heritage language and culture.

A study, done by Xiao (1998), of the Chinese community in Winnipeg reinforces the idea of family and friends serving as mechanisms to ensure language maintenance. However, schools set up to facilitate Chinese language learning were not successful in teaching Chinese but they aided in the efforts to create and sustain cultural groups, and helped maintain their ethnic identity (Xiao, 1998).

In a country as diverse as Canada, the desire of the varied population to maintain their ethnic heritages is immense, and as demonstrated by the various studies, the attempts to retain one's heritage language can have different results. What is evident is that successful heritage language acquisition and maintenance is dependent on an

understanding of the learner's plural identities, and rests on the idea that knowledge of a heritage language has some form of capital for the learner that provides them with a sense of agency within which they choose to learn.

### **2.3 Biculturalism and Bilingualism**

Bilingualism can occur in several different types of contexts but the one most pertinent to this study is that of the development and retention of a mother tongue in an environment where another language is used within society. The loss of one's mother tongue also means the loss of a multi-identity. Such bilingualism is dependent on the role that the parent plays in promoting the heritage language and the positioning it receives in one's life. Part of the reason that a mother tongue is lost is because of the attitude that the speaker holds towards it.

There is a vast amount of literature on bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada. This has been most often conducted in relation to Canada's two official languages, English and French (Duff & Li, 2009). Few studies of Punjabi seek to make a contribution. One particularly relevant study is by Mills (2001) who states that there is a trend in research to focus on the bilingualism of the children "of middle class, professional or academic parents from European or North American backgrounds" making such studies biased towards "elite bilingualism, which is the domain of educated, middle class members" and not focusing on those facing "folk bilingualism, which is the condition of ethnic groups within different states who become bilingual involuntarily in order to work and take part in the educational and welfare social structure" (p. 387). This narrow focus, which often occurs because children of the elite are more accessible and

open to such research, indicates that there is a need to study the children of working class immigrants to see if their experiences are the same or if they differ, possibly due to the lack of privilege afforded to the children of the elite, upper classes.

The participants in Mills's study were considered folk bilinguals and her findings suggest that some of the reasons for being bilingual were somewhat different than those of elite bilinguals. Rather than just learning their heritage language for their own benefit, folk bilinguals learned it because of societal expectations that were placed upon them by relatives still living in Punjab, and relatives who could not speak English, especially grandparents living under the same roof, who expected them to be able to communicate with them. The children felt it was part of their duty to comply and be able to communicate with their family members. From the children's perspective, being able to speak Punjabi to relatives showed respect and if they could not or did not speak Punjabi, they saw themselves as being bad mannered. For the children in Mills's study, their ethnic identities and sense of community were tied into being able to speak Punjabi, as fulfilling obligations that were associated with societal expectations.

A distinction also needs to be made between biculturalism and bilingualism. As Mills (2001) explains, a person can be monolingual but bicultural, or bilingual but monocultural, yet the majority of people are bicultural and somewhere on the continuum between being monolingual and bilingual. What does this mean for a person's identity? Two children growing up in the same household with the same influences could have two entirely different perspectives of what their self-definition and sense of identity is (Mills, 2001). Mills (2001) does not believe that such children do not fit anywhere, rather the concept of a third culture is presented, "created by the contact between two cultures,

where individuals have taken on aspects from both” (p. 390). This synthesis is not created easily, is not uniform and is not rigid or static, and often, these new identities are created in response to issues that arise either within the Punjabi home or outside in the English speaking world, rather than being manifestations of one's own desires and wishes.

Another intriguing point that is made by Mills is the idea that bicultural competence may not translate into a bicultural identity. While some individuals feel comfortable in both settings, some prefer one setting to another. Mills (2003) states, “an individual may have bicultural competence but actually may only identify with only one social or ethnic group” (p. 390). The idea that individuals may choose to only have one identity and reject the other entirely reveals that there are many issues associated with being bicultural and that the issue of competence does not answer the question of why one would turn their back on an aspect of themselves. One possible explanation for this could be that being bicultural is full of conflicts that prove too stressful for an individual and instead they choose to take the easier route of just picking one identity or they make life choices, such as a marriage partner who is an outsider to one of their cultures and they abandon that culture in favour of their spouse.

The idea that people choose to have a bicultural identity is further complicated by the notion of situational ethnicity which allows one to select the cultural values and traditions they want to incorporate into their lives while discarding others and since these identities can shift according to the situation, it means that there are numerous identities available to be represented by (Hall, 1996; Kalsi, 2003). Kalsi suggests that there are several issues that face the bicultural identity of Punjabi women living in Canada, stemming from the differences in the Canadian and Punjabi value systems (2003). While

an individualistic and autonomous culture is promoted in Canada through the school environment, the girls are exposed to a collectivistic culture at home that promotes family interests and decisions over personal wishes and preferences (Kalsi, 2003). As a collectivistic culture, the living situation at home often includes an extended family which results in more pressure to conform and respect the wishes of the elders but also puts stricter expectations on the women to adhere to gender roles where they have less voice and say in family matters, and often face double standards in how they are treated compared to the men in the family; this is especially visible when girls are not given the same freedoms and choices as their brothers (Kalsi, 2003). Kalsi's recommendation to solve the problems that Punjabi women face includes creating an inter-generational dialogue where parents and children speak freely to one another about issues concerning the generation and cultural gap which often are the reasons for tension and unhappiness at home.

#### **2.4 South Asian Diaspora**

Knowledge of the South Asian diaspora is essential to understanding the various dynamics that exist in the lives of South Asian students. Immigration from the Punjab region is quite common and the Punjabi community in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia is one of the largest outside of India. While many Canadian born Punjabis feel included in Canadian culture, they still consider themselves Punjabi or Indian, and many celebrate their culture proudly and maintain connections that reinforce their heritage culture and language. Yet little research has been done to investigate how the South Asian diaspora has been affected by immigration and the influence of other, at times

more dominant, cultures than their own.

According to Rangaswamy (2005), close to 20 million Indians live outside of India and about 2.8% of Canada's population is comprised of South Asians. Of that small percentage, “ninety percent of them live in the metro areas of Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton. The population is still dominated by Sikhs (49%), but there are also Hindus (24%) and Indians of other faiths” (Rangaswamy, 2005, p.294). With such a large percentage of Punjabi Sikhs living in the metro areas of Canada, it is arguable that they must have an impact on their communities, just as the communities would have an impact on them. Yet studies of this sub-population are few and far between with even fewer focusing on the educational aspects of their lives or the evolving Punjabi culture that they manage to maintain so far away from their homeland.

Followers of any religion can be classified as being Punjabi if they are from that region in India or Pakistan. However, unlike Hinduism and Islam, which has followers from many different parts of the world, most Sikhs are Punjabi or their families originated in Punjab. Because of this, often being a Sikh and being Punjabi are erroneously considered to be the same thing. In fact, the majority of the world's Punjabi population is Muslim and comes from Pakistan. In India, close to 38% of Punjab's population is Hindu and about 61% is Sikh, yet in places such as Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.A., many of the immigrants from Punjab tend to be Punjabi Sikhs from India. In spite of the fact that Muslims and Hindus constitute the majority of the global Punjabi population, the notion that to be Punjabi and to be Sikh are synonymous with one another is incorrectly spread through the diasporas with no attention paid to the actual numbers that exist for the Punjabi people in both Pakistan and India.

An understanding of Indian culture and Sikhism is needed in order to understand the society from which Sikhism arose and the contradictions within which it is now practiced. One aspect of their culture that Punjabis in Canada appear to have maintained is that of the caste system, which Ames and Inglis (1974) discuss in their study from over 35 years ago, and which has not been found in many studies of Sikhs since then, partially because it is politically incorrect to be Sikh and follow it yet it is still perpetuated and adhered to, especially when arranging marriages, by the majority of the Sikh population. The caste system traces its roots in India to over 3000 years ago and is:

defined as a hierarchy of endogamous divisions in which membership is hereditary and permanent. Here hierarchy includes inequality both in status and in access to goods and services. Interdependence of the subdivisions, restricted contacts among them, occupational specialization, and/or a degree of cultural distinctiveness might be added as criteria (Berreman, 1960, p.120).

The caste system is entrenched in the ideology of maintaining Aryan purity, which was the basis for its creation. Since then, more elaborate rules have been amalgamated into the system to increase its rigidity and efficiency:

The Aryan people who created the Vedas were by most interpretations also the creators of India's caste system, in which the upper three (twice-born) levels are the arya (pure) while the lower level is the anarya (impure). The elaborate rules of pollution, avoidance, and servitude that characterize the caste system all have as their endpoint the preservation of Aryan purity; that is, by its origins, caste ideology is an ideology of ethnic domination, whatever other concomitants it came to have. (Mahmood, 1989, p. 337).

As with Buddhism, Jainism and many other spiritual movements that were born in India, Sikhism was, in part, a resistance to this rigid, oppressive social order. Sikhism is:

A religious faith originating in India and distinguished for its emphasis on monistic doctrines, disciplined inner-worldliness, and strong communal politico-religious organizations. One of the guiding images for the Sikh, for instance, is the notion of warrior-and-saint. In dealing with those who might threaten the well-being of the Sikh community one should be as determined and fearless as a warrior. In personal affairs within the community, and in one's everyday actions, on the other hand, the Sikh is enjoined to be gentle, selfless, and scholarly, and to treat other members of the faith as brothers and sisters. (Ames & Inglis, 1974, p.1)

In addition, the founding principles of Sikhism are in stark opposition to what is actually practiced today.

According to the Sikh ideal, the purpose of life is to realize God within the world, through the everyday practices of work, worship, and charity, of sacrificing love. All people are to be treated equally, for God's light dwells in all and ego is a major hindrance to God-realization. From Guru Nanak's time on, Sikhism has refused to acknowledge the traditional Indian caste system. (Fisher, 1997, p.382).

So while Sikhism clearly states that all people are equal and that the Indian caste system should be abolished, it is evident that many secular Sikhs experience no conflict in following their religion and still maintaining the caste system. In British Columbia, recent studies show that:

most of the B.C. Sikhs (knowledgeable informants estimate 90 per cent) are *Jats*, traditionally a land-owning cultivator caste. ... The Jats in British Columbia, like

their fellow caste members in the Punjab, consider themselves to be the highest in the hierarchy of castes. Others, especially the Rajputs, do not readily accept their claim. (The Sikh religion ignores caste, but Punjabis have retained caste identities as part of their social life.) (Ames & Inglis, 1974, p.17).

Caste, while publicly condemned, is still practiced in many ways, while many of the notions of purity and contamination have fallen by the wayside, it is still an important and deciding criterion in marriage negotiations between Punjabi families.

Sikhs recognize that Canadians consider caste to be "wrong," and therefore avoid discussing it. Knowledge of caste association may be denied and the ideological castelessness of Sikhism is projected into initial conversations. Although driven underground, caste nevertheless continues to operate at least as a regulator of marriage. (Ames & Inglis, 1974, p. 36)

With such a large majority of the Jatts in British Columbia, it is not surprising that parents teach their children about the caste system and teach them that their caste is superior to other castes found in Punjab. It is important to note that in the Hindu caste system, Jatts and other farmer castes that comprise the majority of Sikh followers are on the third rung of the system, and Brahmin Hindus that live in Punjab still enjoy a high status and live in wealth.

Smythe and Toohey (2009), in their scan of a Punjabi Sikh community, frame their study with the understanding that it is difficult to build upon a student's funds of knowledge or scaffold their background knowledge without having an understanding of the students that are trying to be educated. In other words, teachers cannot teach effectively if they don't know who they are teaching. The study, which focused on

elementary age Punjabi Sikh students living in the Lower Mainland area of British Columbia, found that many of these Canadian born students were underachieving in their schoolwork, partly because the pressures on their families prevented them from having access to English print material in their homes or a constant emphasis on the importance of education. Smythe and Toohey suggest that immigrant families must deal with issues regarding immigration policies, employment prospects, housing and food costs which force matters regarding their children's education onto the back burner. This is not to say that the Punjabi Sikh students are not exposed to valuable literacy and language practices at home, rather, the study suggests that the students are multilingual, multimodal, and multiliterate in ways that are not valued by a classroom that only emphasizes English print literacy. The study also suggests that future studies should look at how the Punjabi language intersects with language and identity in the Canadian context to further our understanding of the Punjabi community.

Marshall and Toohey (2010) studied Punjabi Sikh students in a Canadian elementary school and the educators who were trying to utilize the cultural resources available to the students at home as a means to bridge the disconnect that many students feel between their heritage culture and their western school environment. The classroom teacher was aware that many of the students were cared for by their grandparents while their parents were at work, and because the grandparents lacked English literacy skills, they could not participate in the caregiver reading period in the mornings. In order to bridge the gap between the cultures and give the grandparents a sense of belonging in the school, the teacher asked the student participants to record their grandparent's childhood stories which were then transcribed and translated to English, before being made into

picture storybooks.

These finished picture storybooks were considered hybrids, created from the grandparent's memories but drawn and rewritten from the perspective of the students. The content of some of the stories was considered inappropriate by the classroom teacher for some of the younger students, due to the graphic depictions of life during the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan. The stories also show that these young children were being taught about the historical conflict between Muslims and Sikhs/Hindus, which continues to be a source of conflict today. The content of many of the other stories was also frightening in nature, leading the researchers to draw the conclusion that North American notions of what content is appropriate for children is not necessarily the same in India.

The stories also reveal how gender roles are reproduced in the younger generations by depicting males and females as being treated differently with males being favoured over girls when it came to such things as education. As well, males were portrayed to be courageous and hardworking, while females, when they actually appeared in the stories, often were described by their looks and were responsible for the housework and taking care of the children.

The study shows that Punjabi students bring a wealth of knowledge to the classroom that is not always recognized or utilized, however, as discussed by Marshall and Toohey, the project was just a project, and not something that is regularly done in the classroom. As well, they point out the difficulties that the teacher could have in dealing with difficult issues brought to light by such projects, issues that the teacher may not feel comfortable dealing with on their own. However, as Marshall and Toohey point out, it is

crucial that those difficult dialogues occur and that raising the critical consciousness of the students is a vital and necessary aspect of the educational system.

Returning to Ames and Inglis (1974) can provide insight into the how Sikh families adjusted to life in Canada and what they valued in terms of family and home life. Ames and Inglis (1974) studied a group of Sikh families in British Columbia to understand how they perceived themselves in contrast to Whites living in Canada. They framed their new family structures in Canada according to three broad dimensions:

how family life was supposed to be organized in the Punjab, how they believe Whites live here in Canada, and how they think they themselves might best adjust to the Canadian setting, given their idealized positive Punjabi and negative Canadian models. (Ames & Inglis, 1974, p. 27).

The way that home life in Punjab was organized traditionally was according to a “patrilineal, patrilocal, "paternalistic-maternalistic," extended or joint family ideal” (Ames & Inglis, 1974, p. 28). Many families believe that the way to maintain close familial relationships is by living communally under the same roof, often with married adult men living with their parents and other siblings, either unmarried sisters or brothers, who may or not be married. These living conditions often lead to close relationships between cousins who may live together, and ensuring the maintenance of family bonds for another generation. This set up also creates situations where the grandparents are at-home babysitters while their adult children work.

The Sikh view of the White Canadian home life is very limited; they know that it is mainly nuclear families that live on their own and they tend to focus on negative attributes associated with this lifestyle because as Ames and Inglis (1974) explain:

Few Sikhs maintain close relationships with non-Indians, they assess Canadian family life largely in terms of those features that are the special obsession of our own mass media: sexual exploitation, youthful rebellion against parental authority, the tragedy of old age, and the alleged instability of the conjugal relationship. Further, Sikhs judge Canadian patterns in terms of their own traditional ideals rather than in terms of Canadian values. It is therefore not surprising that their perceptions are at least negatively tinged. Where family life among East Indians in B.C. has been disrupted, even by stresses inherent in the traditional family structure, this disruption is typically explained by reference to "rebellious" members who have been "corrupted" by Canadian patterns. (p. 28).

Most Sikhs living in Canada do not attempt to assimilate into Canadian society and instead, model their Canadian home lives as much as possible after the Punjabi ideals that they were raised within in Punjab. While they do have to make adjustments and concessions because of their new environment, they try as much as possible to maintain their traditional models and use them as a way to maintain their culture and familial ties. A final interesting point is that there was little difference between the ideals of Canadian born and Indian born Sikhs living in Canada, suggesting that the Sikh community is working hard to maintain its traditional culture, especially with its younger generations.

The difference in the child rearing practices between first and second generation Punjabi mothers in Britain suggests that there is a distinct difference between how newly immigrated and foreign born Punjabis raise their children (Dosanjh, 1997; Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998). The attitudes towards education by Asian parents show that views differ greatly depending on the generation. First generation parents were suspicious of English

schools since they seemed to contradict their own religious and cultural beliefs yet still highly values the education that their children were receiving (Dosanjh, 1997). Dosanjh and Ghuman's study suggests that second generation Punjabis are greatly affected by the dominant culture that they are raised in and their world views does not match up either with those of their parent's generation or their white counterparts. Major changes between the generations suggest that parents are now more likely to accept their children's independence in choosing their own clothing, books and their attitudes towards giving their children pocket money are more relaxed than their parent's. An interesting aspect of the studies suggests that parents are much more likely to accept and encourage biculturalism in their children's lives. Second generation parents seek to find a balance between their Punjabi heritage and the dominant mainstream culture they live in, perhaps limiting the amount of conflict and confusion their children will feel when negotiating their own space between two vastly different cultures.

This new cultural space is unique and wholly unstudied, suggesting that the second and third generation children are navigating their own paths, yet the study does not fully address the issue of heritage language maintenance or the role that it plays in their lives. While first generation parents ensured that their children were fluent in Punjabi, the same is not true of second generation parents. Although second generation parents feel heritage language maintenance is important and think their children should be able to speak Punjabi, and some were teaching their children Punjabi, the fact remains that the children are unable to communicate in Punjabi (Dosanjh, 1997). Dosanjh (1997) explains that part of the problem is that minority languages are difficult to fit into the curriculum and “there is a serious shortage of qualified staff, books, and other illustrative

material” (p. 7). There is tremendous need for appropriate Punjabi as a Second/Heritage Language materials, and there is also a bigger problem regarding teachers, although there are many people more than qualified to teach Punjabi, their training and qualifications are not recognized in countries such as Canada and Britain, forcing them into blue collar work and not into the classrooms.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3. 1 Introduction**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach (Duff, 2008; Stake, 1995; & Yin, 1994) to gain an understanding of the complex identities of young adults in a Punjabi Language class. The methodology and the techniques used to collect and analyze the data for the study are outlined in this chapter. The site and participant selection, the data collection through the unit of study, classroom observations and my own reflections, and the analysis of the data are all described. By triangulating these multiple perspectives, the study attempts to add richness, as well as provide measures of ‘trustworthiness’.

A primary rationale for this study is the lack of research looking at the identity negotiations of Punjabi heritage language learners. Punjabi classes are offered in various British Columbian school districts, with the majority of classes being taught in Surrey and Abbotsford, but a limited number of classes are also taught in districts such as Vancouver, and Burnaby, usually only when there is enough of a demand and when the minimum enrolment numbers are high enough to justify running a class. This was the case in Burnaby in the 2008 - 2009 school year when two Punjabi classes were introduced at Burnaby South Secondary and, with increased enrolment, continued on into the 2009-2010 school year.

After discussing the research site and the participants involved, the methodology used to collect the data for this study will be described. The students were asked to complete a unit of work (i.e. a project) on their identities and the work, including class discussions, reflections, journals, and artefacts, that they completed during this period is

used as data, as are the audio recordings taken while the students are presenting their final projects and presentations.

The purpose of this research was to understand what Punjabi students perceived their identities to be and what factors went into the formation of their identities. Specifically, the research asked: “What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home?” and “What factors figure prominently in the constructions of their identity?” Lastly, “Does learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?” The data collection for this unit was done through formal assignments such as journals, assignments and projects but also included classroom discussions on topics and issues related to identity and culture.

### **3.2 The Site and the Participants**

The school where the study took place is Burnaby South Secondary and BC Provincial School for the Deaf, one of eight high schools in Burnaby, and it is located in the south west side of Burnaby. The school population the year of the study was approximately 1750, and this includes the students who are enrolled in the BC Provincial School for the Deaf, a provincial resource program. The school population is multicultural, consisting of students from diverse backgrounds, with its catchment area including a range of socio-economic neighbourhoods, from the lower income areas near Metrotown to the more affluent South Slope, where Burnaby South itself is located.

Burnaby South is the only school in Burnaby where there was a Punjabi program, although Punjabi is offered in all Burnaby high schools but the enrolment numbers are

never high enough to have classes run. Although Burnaby South had a Punjabi program in the mid 90's, enrolment dropped in 1998 and did not run again until the 2008 – 2009 school year. In that year, 28 students signed up for Punjabi and two separate classes were offered. Punjabi 9, which had 13 students enrolled and Introductory Punjabi 11, which had 15 students enrolled. The school and the district attempted to find a qualified teacher within the district to teach the two courses, and if they could not, then the two classes would be cancelled.

I had currently been an English and E.S.L. teacher at Burnaby South, having taught there for three years already, and when another teacher could not be found to teach Punjabi, I was asked to teach the two classes. I am Punjabi, and was raised in a Punjabi environment. Although I had studied Punjabi informally throughout my childhood, I took two years of Punjabi at the University of British Columbia. As well, my father, Sadhu Binning, is part of Punjabi Language Education Association and was instrumental in writing the Punjabi curriculum for British Columbia and getting Punjabi implemented in British Columbia elementary and high schools. He was also an instructor of Punjabi at the University of British Columbia, from 1988 until he retired in 2005. My access to him and his resources were also part of the reason why I was asked to teach the Punjabi classes at Burnaby South.

The participants in this study are a group of fifteen grade 11 students who were all taking Punjabi 11 class in the 2009 - 2010 school year. The class was comprised of eight girls and seven boys, all either 15 or 16 years old at the time of the study. Of the fifteen students, fourteen students are from a Punjabi background although not all of them are able to speak or understand spoken Punjabi, the other one student is of Hindu heritage.

Also, with the exception of one student who was born in England and immigrated to Canada at the age of 2 with his family, all of the students were born in Canada. These same fifteen students had taken Introductory Punjabi 11 the year before. The students all had varied amounts of knowledge of Punjabi language and culture. Some could read and write it fluently prior to taking the class while others had never encountered the Punjabi script Gurmukhi or the spoken language in depth before entering the class. The students all had some knowledge of Punjabi culture, mainly through Punjabi music such as Bhangra and their Punjabi friends. Although the students were at different levels, and had different reasons for taking Punjabi, through the two years that they were in Introductory Punjabi 11 and Punjabi 11, the class became quite close and comfortable with one another and were more willing to share their thoughts in classroom discussions and presentations. In terms of the study, no claims are made regarding generalizability particularly since the students cannot be considered to represent all Punjabi youth because they have already chosen to take Punjabi as a class in high school, thereby indicating that in some way, they perceive Punjabi as being an important and integral aspect of some part of their lives.

The class was one of eight in the student's timetables, and since there are four classes per day, I taught them either two or three times in a regular school week. The class was the last one of the day, starting at 1:58 p.m. and running until 3:11 p.m. The students chose to take this class not only to learn how to read, write and speak their heritage language (with the exception of one student who identifies Hindi as her heritage language), but also because it satisfies the language requirement for universities, where the majority of the students in the class are headed after graduating from high school.

The students listed below are the ones that participated in the study. Since data was analysed thematically, some of the student’s work is discussed and featured more predominantly than others because some students generated more data in general to the emerging themes. This was also in part since not all of the student’s took the assignments and projects as seriously as others, and did not put as much effort into their assignments, thereby providing less data than other students.

**Table 3.1 Participants in the study by gender**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>
Harjit	Female
Harnit	Female
Harvir	Male
Jeetam	Female
Kuljit	Female
Mandeep	Female
Manraj	Male
Maskeen	Male
Navjit	Female
Parveen	Female
Pavan	Male
Priya	Female
Ranjot	Male
Sanam	Male
Sanjiv	Male

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

Data was collected using multiple methodological tools, including participant observation, audio-taping, and written reflections. Data collection also occurred through the analysis of work produced by the students. Those included in-class activities done by the students (e.g. reflections, journals), group discussions or assignments done in preparation for the main project of the unit. The variety of the work collected from the

students offered up a clearer understanding of what they thought and were trying to express, as well as giving evidence for why they thought what they did. Students were audio-taped during discussions and presentations. Relevant recordings were then later transcribed. Audio-taping is less intrusive than video and the behaviour of the students was less affected than by the presence of a video camera. The Identity projects created by the students were photographed and, in conjunction with the audio recording of their presentations, allowed for an effective analysis of the projects. This was invaluable as it afforded the opportunity to review presentations and keep the integrity of the project tied in with the student who created it.

**Table 3.2 Data collection methods**

Methods	Data Collection Period	Data
1. Student Reflections and Journals	Identity Unit – Part 1 Identity Unit – Part 3 Identity Unit – Part 6	Reflections and Journals
2. Interviews (Focal group discussions) with students	Identity Unit – Part 2	Classnotes and Audio Recordings
3. Classroom Observations	On-Going	Field notes of the unit plan as enacted
4. Teacher Journal	On-Going	Journal Entries (completed after each lesson)
5. Documents	Identity Unit – Part 4 Identity Unit – Part 5	Course Outline Unit Plan Students Finished Projects

An incentive for many students taking Punjabi is that it teaches students about Punjabi culture. According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Package (IRP) for Punjabi includes the following Prescribed Learning Outcomes for Punjabi 11:

students will be able to analyse the effects that knowing about Punjabi language and culture might have on various aspects of their lives and demonstrate an appreciation of Punjabi language and culture and its place in local and global communities (BC Ministry of Education, Appendix A).

It is in keeping with these Prescribed Learning Outcomes that the assignments and project for the study have been created. The unit of study, which is summarized below, focused on creating awareness and understanding of what culture is and can be, and then asking the students to define what their own multi-identities are in accordance with their understandings of what culture is.

The unit of work that the students completed was designed to lead the students down a path of self-discovery. Many Punjabi students tend to be friends with other Punjabi students and often are unable to identify why they choose to be friends mostly with students from similar backgrounds as them. They are unable to articulate the abstract differences between them and the dominant culture that sometimes prevents a complete and full integration. A brief description of the six-part unit follows.

### **3.4 The Design of the Identity Unit**

#### *Identity Unit – Part 1*

The first activity of the unit used a shortened essay written by Peggy McIntosh, titled “Unpacking the Invisible Backpack,” to teach the students about the idea of white privilege and give them a political perspective to help explain the differences they may feel from other students and the society they, for lack of any other, must call their own (1988). This activity aimed to understand if the students saw themselves as existing within two separate communities or whether they felt they occupy a hybrid third space. After a group reading of the essay and a classroom discussion, the students were asked to keep a journal recording examples of what they perceive to be white privilege and this journal was the basis of a follow up classroom discussion where the students shared their findings. The work produced by the students with this activity would be considered vital in getting realistic information regarding the ways Punjabi students perceive themselves to be different than other students in their own community and school and the ways that their ethnic identity was framed as being “other,” unlike the dominant white culture that pervaded most aspects of their lives.

#### *Identity Unit – Part 2*

The next activity was a discussion of stereotypes that the students held about Punjabi teens. As a class, a list of stereotypes was generated and then discussed. Those stereotypes were then broken down as a class and discussed, and the students were asked to consider the impact a minority group, around whom many of the stereotypes are based on, can have on a larger community and the way that community is perceived by others,

as well as ways that the image can be improved and restored to reflect the majority of Punjabis.

### *Identity Unit – Part 3*

After discussing the various stereotypes they felt were held about their cultural community, I moved on to discuss the students and their identities. They took part in a brainstorming session where they were asked to think about all the various ways that they describe themselves. I asked them to consider how they would describe themselves to a variety of people in a variety of situations and have them think of all the different aspects of themselves when they are brainstorming. This brainstorming session took the form of a free write that was used by the students when they began their self-discovery projects. These journals were also collected and used as data in the study. The follow up to this assignment was a classroom discussion where the students shared the different ways that they identify themselves. The intent behind having the students share their thoughts was that the students would aid each other and scaffold their understanding of identity in preparation for their project. I facilitated the discussion and also took notes on their ideas, which they were able to see on the overhead screen. These notes were then copied and distributed to the students and their original notes collected. These joined activities aided in the understanding of how these students define themselves as well as being able to see what factors go into that definition.

#### *Identity Unit – Part 4*

The next part of the study was tied in with the project itself and involved asking the students to bring in a personal artefact that they thought connected them to their culture/history. They were asked to explain the significance of their artefact in a class presentation. This activity was to show the students how belongings in their family helped to maintain their culture as well as how they can use those belongings as evidence of their culture. This assignment was planned to show how the student's perceived identities can be based on ethnicity and what connections the students have to their culture and history. This assignment intended to allow the students to see how aspects of their identity are reflected back to them in their home and environment. These presentations were to be audio-taped and the students would provide their own reflections on this assignment in the reflections to be completed at the end of the unit.

#### *Identity Unit – Part 5*

All of the previous activities were in preparation for the self discovery project that sought to bring together the student's notions of what their multi identities are and their abilities to express them. The project asked the students to assess their own ideas about culture and think about the different cultures that they are a part of. It was designed to answer some of the questions that had been asked in the activities leading up to the project such as how do the students define themselves and what factors go into those definitions? As well, how many/how much of these perceived identities are based on ethnicity? One final area that the project asked the students to explore is how learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students perceive for themselves and how

their identities have been impacted by learning their heritage language. And lastly, the students were able to pick their own medium(s) in which to present their findings. They had the freedom to explore and define what community they felt they belonged to, and how they chose to define it. Rather than having the students explicitly describe who they are, they were asked to consider the different identities that they have. This project asked them to examine the different aspects of their life (within school, at home, online, with friends, with family, alone, on sports teams, etc) and create a visual representation of what their own, unique culture is and what their different identities are. The students were asked to present their projects to the class and these presentations were to be audio taped, photographed and used as data.

The Identity project was assessed holistically, with the students being made aware of the requirements of the project when it was assigned. This type of assessment is one that the students are very familiar with, as it was the most common way that their projects had been assessed, in both Punjabi 10 and Punjabi 11. The criteria was designed to be quite broad and encompassing, thereby allowing the students to not feel inhibited by parameters or requirements that may have prevented them from expressing themselves fully. The criteria focused on meeting the requirements of the Punjabi 11 curriculum, which was used to create the unit itself. The form of expression chosen by the students to showcase their identities and their reflection on their choice of that form was also considered in assessment, as was the actual layout or delivery of the project in connection to the ideas and concepts. Lastly, the assessment also looked at the depth of examination and connection to the issues and ideas discussed in the unit's previous activities. The broad scope of the project required students to be assessed in a manner where they were

not forced to adhere to a strict criteria or checklist, instead the assessment was designed to encourage the students to come up with their own forms of expressing themselves.

### *Identity Unit – Part 6*

After the students presented their projects, the unit wrapped up with students writing reflections on the project. They were asked to comment on the positive and negative aspects of the unit, as well as discussing what they learned and what they wished they could learn more about. The intention was that the reflections were also to be a medium for the students to share with myself any issues or thoughts that they had not wanted to share with the class during discussions. These reflections were private and collected at the end of class.

This unit, which was designed according the Prescribed Learning Outcomes for Punjabi 11 is aimed at seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home?
2. What factors figure prominently in the constructions of their identity?
3. Does learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The analytical procedures were conducted through the following stages: (1) organization of the data, (2) generating categories and themes, (3) re-testing the emerging

themes against the data, (4) looking for exceptions, (5) writing the thesis.

Specifically using an iterative process of thematic analysis (Spradley 1980), the data was analyzed for emergent, recurring descriptive themes. Researcher/teacher's reflections from observation and field notes, students drafts and discussion transcripts were reviewed regularly throughout the unit of work and tentative themes and categories were generated. These were tested against the new data that emerged from the multiple data sources and revised, confirmed or dropped from the emerging findings. The themes that ultimately emerged were related to culture, religion, gender, nationality, ethnicity, family and group identities. Also, the data was examined on an individual basis, with the total body of a student's work used as a case study, or example of the multi-identities of one student, and what those particular multi-identities entail. The themes were verified for trustworthiness through the process of data triangulation. Triangulation of the data through the use of different sources and methods, as well as prolonged engagement with the study participants and persistent observation are three techniques outlined as increasing credibility and trustworthiness within a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The student's journals were often the starting points for the potential themes. The journals were examined as independent documents and then compared to one another for common themes. This same procedure was done for the projects, which had both visual and oral components to them and especially for some of the projects, the student's commentary was needed to make meaning of the visual aspects of the projects. I then transcribed relevant audio recordings of the presentations. The classroom discussions were then used to verify the commonality of the themes and expand on the initial findings. This process of comparing the student's work allowed for themes to emerge rather than

imposing their work into pre-meditated themes chosen prior to data analysis.

As I was the classroom teacher for the duration of the unit and had been their classroom teacher the prior school year as well, my familiarity with the students allowed me to assess for possible areas of distortion within the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This familiarity also has its limitations, which will be discussed later in Chapter 5.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness of Inquiry**

The standards used to ascertain the trustworthiness of the study warrants further commentary. Lincoln and Guba (1986) have proposed the construct of ‘trustworthiness’ as an alternative to concepts of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. The credibility of this study rests in the triangulation of the direct observations by the researcher, the researcher’s journals, the student’s journals and reflections, the classroom discussions and the student artefacts. I have also tried to articulate and make explicit my subjective position as a researcher of Punjabi heritage with whom the students had an established relationship. I also made explicit that I had had similar experiences myself so that my subjectivities were also examined to ensure that the themes were emerging from the data and checked to ensure that they were tested against my own subjectivities.

## **Chapter Four: Reporting of the Findings**

This study examined the notions of culture and identity/ies held by high school students, of mainly Punjabi descent, in a Punjabi 11 class as realized in a unit designed to afford them opportunities to gain greater awareness of their attitudes and beliefs regarding what comprised their culture. They are very proud of being Punjabi and, through the guidance of their family and the support of their peers, continue to practice and express this aspect of their identities in a variety of ways.

### **4.1 Punjabi/Canadian**

The students were all asked to consider how they ‘labelled themselves’, and what labels they considered most important. The majority of the students felt that their ethnic and national identities were particularly significant and wanted them presented together. The students all identified themselves as Canadian and, with the exception of one student were all born in Canada as well. For example, statements made in their journals by Sanjiv and Harvir “I am Indo-Canadian”, Pavan “I am an Indo Canadian” and Manraj “I am an Indo-Canadian male” all reveal similar ideas about how they perceive themselves. However, other students in the class, through the class discussion, expressed dissatisfaction with the term “Indo-Canadian” because for them it has come to have a negative connotation. While this may not be true for Indo-Canadians living elsewhere in Canada, the students felt that when the media uses the term Indo-Canadian, it is usually about something negative that an Indo-Canadian has done, and this is done, in their opinion because of the sensational way Indo-Canadians are typically portrayed by the local media as gangsters and perpetrators of crimes such as domestic disputes and

violence against women. The students also rejected the term “South Asian” as they felt that it was too general in its geographical description and therefore did not rightfully identify where they and their parents were from. Because of this reasoning and perception of negative bias associated with Indo-Canadian and South Asian, some of the students chose purposefully not to be defined by either term. Yet their Canadian identity was often second to their ethnic or religious identity, such as being Punjabi or Sikh.

Other students, rather than adopt traditional multi-identity labels such as Indo-Canadian, chose instead to let the different ways that they define themselves stand on their own, such as being “Punjabi Sikh Canadian” or “Sikh, Punjabi and Jatt”. What is significant about how they define themselves is how none of the students put their Canadian identity first, or sometimes, forget it completely, although they are all Canadian born, with the exception of one student who was born in England, immigrated with his family to Canada when he was 2 and is now a Canadian citizen. Indo-Canadian automatically places the Indian or Indo prefix before Canadian, but other students chose to identify themselves with terms representing their religion, their ethnicity and even their caste before stating that they are Canadian. For example, in her journal, Mandeep states “I am a Punjabi Sikh Canadian,” placing her Canadian identity after her religious and ethnic identities. Yet other students omit their Canadian identities entirely, such as in Navjit’s journal “I am Sikh, Punjabi and Jatt” and in Parveen’s “I am Sikh and Jatt.” Here they both place their religious identities first and then, both state that they are Jatt, which is one of the many social classes or castes found in India. The contradiction of being both Sikh and Jatt is discussed later in this chapter under religion and culture. Ranjot also states something similar in his journal with “I am a Jatt Punjabi who lives in

Canada. I am a proud Sikh.” His statement suggests that living in Canada is secondary to his caste and his ethnic roots. As well, he attaches the notion of being proud to his religion, not his nationality, which is Canadian. For many students, their identity is tied in acutely with their ethnicity, religion and/or social caste and not so much with being Canadian, which could possibly be an aspect of their identity that they see as being very apparent and the “norm” against which they define themselves by their “otherness,” which happens to be being Punjabi, Sikh and/or Jatt.

However, not all students in the study ignored the Canadian aspects of their identities. Maskeen, in his journal, writes “My home life is influenced greatly by both Punjabi and Canadian culture.” Harjit actually traces the different aspects of her personality and habits to either India or Canada, and her descriptions of each are very telling in how she perceives the two countries. She recounts:

As a kid, I lived in India for about 5 years. Those memories and what India taught me in that time is what makes up most of my childhood. I was taught discipline, manners and obedience while I lived there and that represents a large portion of how I act and respond now. I was born in Canada and that makes me a Canadian, I feel a strong sense of pride in being a Canadian and living here most my life has taught me to be independent, and more caring in general. (Harjit, Identity project)

Living in India as a child meant acquiring traditional Indian values such as being obedient and adhering to the rules, while spending the majority of her life in Canada has given her the opportunity to learn to be independent, and more caring in general, which combined with her pride in being Canadian, could be seen as an acceptance of the multicultural society Canada is, as opposed to the more homogenous Indian society.

This sentiment of being proud to be Canadian was echoed in Harnit’s project as well. “I consider myself Canadian because I was born here and this is where I live and I am proud to live in such a beautiful and privileged country” (Harnit, Identity project). It could be seen that since the students are born and live in Canada, they do not have the same need to define their Canadian identity as they do their ethnic identities and rather take for granted the fact that they are Canadian. This can be seen in the appreciative statements of both Harjit and Harnit and also, even though many of the students do not verbalize their approval of their Canadian identities, they also don’t speak against them, suggesting that their lack of attention to them is a matter of oversight and not a complete denial of the country they were born in and live in.

**Figure 4.1 Image taken from Harnit’s identity project**



Many of the students also identified themselves by their hobbies and their interests, which will be discussed in a section later in this chapter. However, Mandeep's response stands out because she connects her interest to her birthplace, attaching meaning and significance to where she was born, rather than just taking it for granted. She explains:

One way I identify myself is as a Canucks fan. I was born in Vancouver and so was the team Vancouver Canucks. I've been watching hockey ever since I was born, and this is because my whole family watches it. I try not to miss a single game, losing I never give up, I always have hope because I am a true Canuck and even if they're losing, I still have hope. (Gurjeet, Identity project)

Revealing her status as a true and loyal fan to the local sports team connects her to her hometown and binds her identity to one of the few things, hockey, which most people can truly agree is Canadian.

#### **4.2 Sikh Religion and Punjabi Culture**

For some students, religion and culture are two autonomous realms, which are clearly defined by their own separate ideals and which rarely fuse with one another, especially if there happens to be contradictions between the two. However, for many of the participants in this study, religion and culture are terms that appear, for the most part, to be interchangeable and this does not seem to pose a problem for them or their identities. This is true even when faced with contested values.

There are some students who are religious and are fully cognizant of what that

means. For example, “I follow the Sikh religion. I am proud to practice the Sikh religion, I have a turban and keep my hair.” (Sanjiv, journal). Sanjiv’s adherence to the Sikh religion is evident not only by his appearance but also by his knowledge of Sikhism and dedication to live daily by the ideals outlined by it. When describing his passion for basketball, he says:

I practice basketball to become the best I can possibly become and become a good role model for younger kids. ... I do not like to see people suffering, as I want to help people. I am the responsible one out of my friends and I do not get myself into wrong things. (Sanjiv, journal)

The morals and values he has learned through his religion guide him in his everyday life and help to shape who he is and what he does, both for himself and others.

Harjit also has a clear understanding of what it means to be Sikh and goes to extra lengths to ensure she lives her life according to her beliefs, revealing that one of the reasons she is learning Punjabi is to be able to read the words of the Sikh gurus for herself in Punjabi. She explains the role of Sikhism in her life by saying:

My religion is what shapes my life as I live it now. I attempt to live honestly and love all. I believe in god and hope that one day I will be blessed enough to meet him. My guru is Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and learning to read and understand what Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji wrote not too long ago is my goal. That is one of the reasons I love Punjabi.

My religion is very important to me because it has taught me how to live and guided me away from dangerous paths. The base of my identity has been formed by my religion. Without my religion and god I would be incomplete. I go to the

Gurdwara very often and help out there by teaching kirtan. I like to sing phrases from Guru Ji. I am a Sikh and believe in one god. I was taught throughout my life that everyone is equal and discrimination is strongly discouraged. No matter what deeds were committed in the past, the moment at hand is what counts. We have to live in the present and search inside ourselves. (Harjit, Identity project)

Harjit wrote this excerpt in the shape of a khanda (see image below) which is one of the more recognizable symbols of Sikhism, and consists of three swords, one which was double edged and a chakkar or circular blade meant to be thrown in battle. It is very evident that religion plays an immense role in her life and she defines her life by the ideals set forth by Sikhism.



in the following: St Michaels Senior Home, United Nations Connections Club, Gobind Sarvar Sikh School, Vancouver Aquarium, Science World Fun Run. I like to make use of any free time that I have. (Kuljit, Identity project)

Again, she is a student who has taken the onus upon herself to learn about her religion and ensure that her life is lived following the Sikh ideology.

The three students discussed above were dedicated to their religion and felt it was important that their daily lives encompass the beliefs of Sikhism. However, many of the rest of the students practice a more secularized version of Sikhism, and this is where the conflation of religion and culture becomes more evident, as students who are not fully educated about the religious and cultural basis for their beliefs tend to take what they see and hear around them and group it as one, rather than being fully aware of what comprises their religion and what comprises their culture. This is not uncommon within society as a whole and reflects some of the assumptions made by many secular Sikhs. It is important to note that none of the students who presented more secularized views of their religion felt that the contradictions between their religion and culture were of troublesome and instead believed that they were different aspects of their identity that could exist together, without being conflicting.

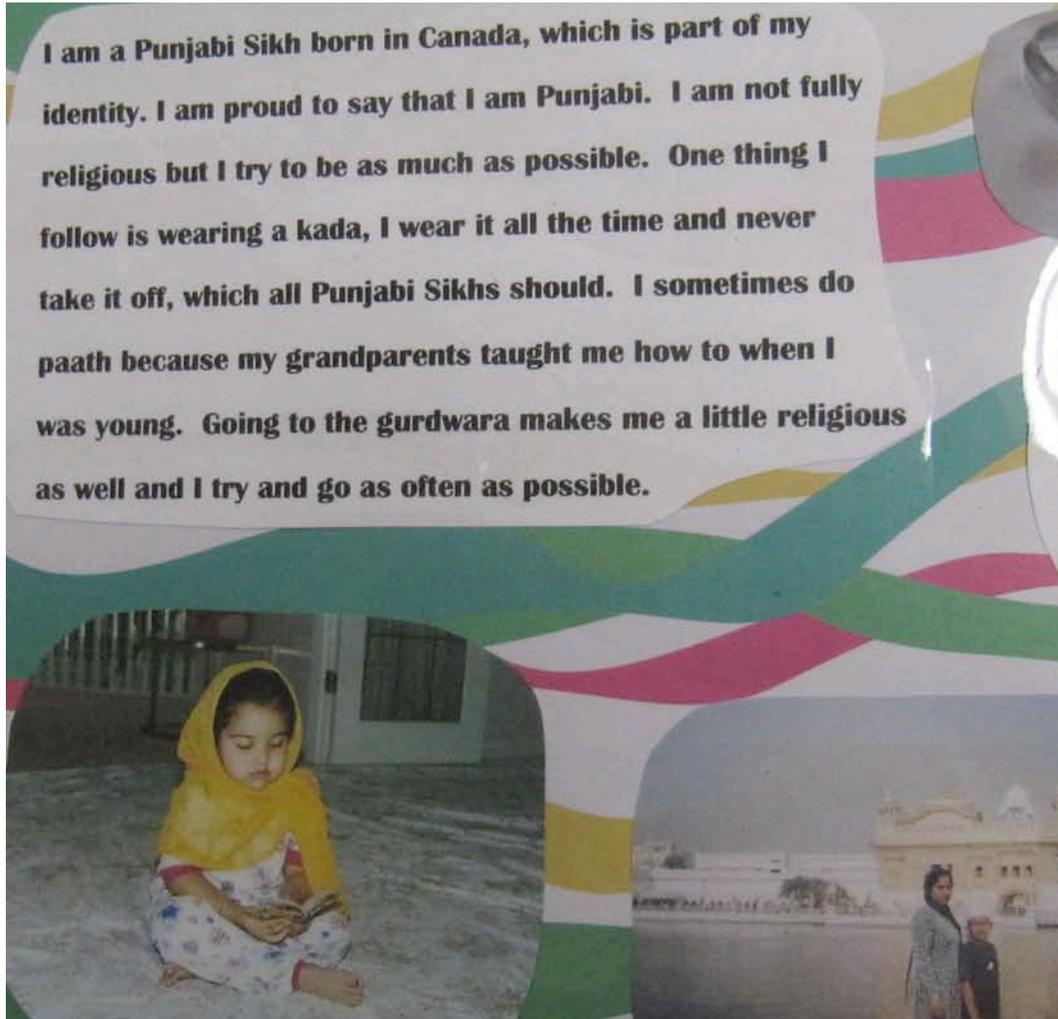
A key example of this type of reasoning is exemplified by Mandeep, who shifts between being Punjabi and Sikh with ease and discusses the two of them as being the same thing. She states:

I am a Punjabi Sikh born in Canada, which is part of my identity. I am proud to say that I am Punjabi. I am not fully religious but I try as much as possible. One thing I follow is wearing a kara [silver bracelet], I wear it all the time and never

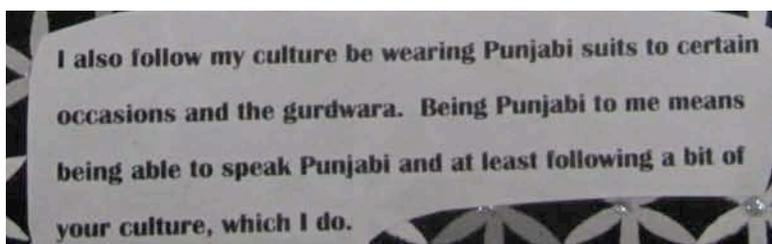
take it off, which all Punjabi Sikhs should. I sometimes do paath [religious prayer] because my grandparents taught me how to when I was young. Going to the gurdwara [Sikh temple] makes me a little religious as well and I try and go as often as possible.” “I also follow my culture by wearing Punjabi suits to certain occasions and the gurdwara. Being Punjabi for me is being able to speak Punjabi and at least following a bit of your culture, which I do.” “Also, I identify myself as Punjabi Sikh by including Kaur in my name. (Mandeep, Identity project)

To be Punjabi means to be from or have parents from the state of Punjab in India, or the province of Punjab in Pakistan and to speak Punjabi, which Mandeep does say is one of the ways that she maintains her Punjabi identity, as is wearing Punjabi clothing. And wearing a khara, doing paath, and going to the Gurdwara is not part of being Punjabi but instead it is part of being Sikh.

**Figure 4.3 Image taken from Mandeep's identity project**



**Figure 4.4 Image #2 taken from Mandeep's identity project**



The reason for this confusion and the fact that so many of the students don't have

a problem with this is that most Sikhs are Punjabi, but not all Punjabis are Sikhs.

The conflict between being Punjabi and being Sikh is shown when actual characteristics of Punjabi culture are opposed to in Sikhism. The main source for this conflict that was revealed by the students is their adherence to their jati or caste. For example, in their journals, the students made the following statements “I am Sikh, Punjabi and Jatt” (Navjit), “I am Sikh and Jatt” (Parveen) and “I am a Jatt Punjabi who lives in Canada. I am a proud Sikh” (Ranjot).

**Figure 4.5 Image taken from Ranjot’s identity project**



The image above from Ranjot’s identity project consists of the phrase “Putt Jattan De” which means “the sons of Jatts,” with Jatts being the caste of farmers in India and the symbol above is the Khanda or a main symbol of Sikhism (as discussed earlier).

Even though one of the underlying tenants of Sikhism is that the caste system should be abolished and that all people are equal, reality shows that most secular Sikhs do not feel conflicted following their religion and still maintaining the caste system. Part of the reason that the students in the study are proud of being Jatt is because the majority of Sikhs who immigrate to British Columbia are Jats and consider themselves to be the highest caste. Several of the other students also identified themselves as being Sikh and Jatt in classroom discussions, with no issue of the contradictions that exist within the two identities and the common understanding with the students was that it was not an issue and should not be made into one.

Religion was stated by all of the students as being a critical aspect of their identity. Yet a closer examination of what some of them mean by religion actually reveals that it is a combination of the Sikh religion and Punjabi culture, which do not necessarily exist harmoniously with one another, yet do not appear to pose a problem for the students.

The discussion regarding culture is not limited to just Punjabi culture, but this is where the students tended to focus. Canadian culture is difficult to define and many aspects of that culture come through in the participant's discussion of being Canadian (as discussed earlier) or through their own unique identities (discussed later in this chapter).

### **4.3 Punjabi Language**

Punjab is a region in India and Pakistan, and Punjabi is the language of that region, as well as the name for the people and culture that started there. Considering that for 14 of the 15 the students, Punjabi is their heritage language, it is only natural that it play a role in the identities of the students. In order for Punjabi to thrive in the lives of these students, Punjabi must play a role in their lives and have some relevance to who they are and wish to be. The examples of how Punjabi is used and perceived by the students can be seen in a variety of ways. For some students, Punjabi is a means to communicate with their family and friends, or to listen to the latest bhangra songs, while for others it is a pathway to understanding their religion and showing that they are participating in their culture.

Having some knowledge of Punjabi can be seen as a requirement of being Punjabi for some students, such as Mandeep. "Being Punjabi for me is being able to speak

Punjabi” (Mandeep, Identity project). This simple statement easily explains why students choose to learn Punjabi and wish to maintain their heritage language. Knowing Punjabi opens doors for the students through which they can access their culture, religion and maintain their kinship ties.

Manraj and Harvir explain that one of the reasons they are friends with other Punjabi students is because they speak the same language. Being able to communicate with your friends in two different languages suggests that there is less of a chance of being misunderstood. Manraj explains in his journal: “We speak the same language and can relate to each others way of life at home and how they are dealing with it.” Harvir’s journal entry reads: “another reason why I hang out with my friends is because we all can speak Punjabi with each other and understand Indo Canadian issues such as crime, drinking and driving.” Here Manraj and Harvir equate knowing and being able to speak Punjabi with being fluent in Punjabi culture and the issues that may be present in the culture. Harvir’s identity project also reflects how he feels about Punjabi, using both Punjabi and English to define who he is (Punjabi Canadian) and write his name (Harvir Powar). For him, this represents the balanced role that Punjabi and English play in his life.

**Figure 4.6 Image taken from Harvir’s identity project**



This says Punjabi Canadian

**Figure 4.7 Image #2 taken from Harvir's identity project**



Here his name is in half Punjabi, half English

For Harjit, learning Punjabi is important because it is how she is able to read the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, which is the Sikh Holy Book.

My guru is Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and learning to read and understand what Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji wrote not too long ago is my goal. That is one of the reasons I love Punjabi. ... I go to the Gurdwara very often and help out there by teaching kirtan. I like to sing phrases from Guru Ji. (Harjit, Identity project)

For Harjit, her love for Punjabi is connected to her desire to be able to practice her religion authentically. It is such dedication and need for Punjabi that ensures that she will maintain her heritage language.

Sanam chose to do his most of his Identity Project, most of the poster and the entire presentation, in Punjabi. He is able to express in Punjabi sentiments that he cannot necessarily express as effectively in English. For example, the following sentence loses some of the essence of its meaning when its translated, which is true of many translations “ਮੈਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਮਾਤਾ ਤੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਉਚਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਇਕ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ ਪੁਤ ਬਨ ਕੇ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਖੁਸ਼ ਰਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ।” Translation: “When I grow up, I want to make my mother and father proud by raising the status of their name by being an obedient son who always keeps his parents happy” (Sanam, Identity project). The phrase “ਉਚਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ” doesn't quite mean raising the status of their name, although that is the literal

translation of the idiom. For Sanam, expressing his traditional Punjabi values effectively means expressing them in his mother tongue, Punjabi.

#### **4.4 Group Identities**

What came to the forefront through this study is that Punjabi students do see themselves as having a unique cultural identity that they share with other students of Punjabi or similar backgrounds. For many, this unique identity is essential and creates the foundation for their social groups, where the students tend to gravitate towards other Punjabi students. This group identity is created by many factors but the main ones appear to be religion and culture, both of which are taught at home by the family, and validated by their friends at school. Not all students choose to spend all their time with friends from similar backgrounds but most do. The students perceive that they get along better with other Punjabis/Indians because they share the same values and morals. This is common for many of them and suggests that it is prevalent, that as a community, Punjabi families encourage the separation of their children from children of other cultures, possibly because of fear of the unknown. These same sentiments and fears are echoed by many of the participants in this study. Jeetam's reasoning for why she prefers to be friends with people of similar ethnicities includes a sweeping generalization of "white people" and the lack of values/morals that they may have, and a comfort with having friends who she doesn't have to explain herself to:

Why I make the choice to hang out with other students of similar backgrounds is because they are more understanding in ways such as when I tell them that I'm not allowed out late at night, I won't get questioned for the reason, because they

also follow the same values/rules as me as if it was a white person they'd think the opposite and instead of making me feel better they'd probably influence me to make up excuses, lie and do whatever it takes to rebel against my rules just to stay with them. When I hang out with brown people I feel more comfortable and I know that instead of trying to get me in trouble, they'd be like "Hey, it 9:00 and it's time for you to leave" and remind me 10 minutes before. (Jeetam, journal)

Although she does not know for sure, she assumes that "white people" are so different from her that they will not understand her and will try to tempt her to behave in ways that are inappropriate.

Harnit reiterates many of the same ideas as Jeetam, and also adds to it the idea that there are certain familial expectations for her future such as going to school, having a career and getting married, which her Punjabi friends also share. She states:

I make the decision to hang out with people of similar backgrounds because they have similar morals. Unlike people of different backgrounds our parents have set the same rules. For example, dating is a no, til I am older, this is the same as my friends. When I am mad about something that has to do with my family ... I prefer talking to my friends with the same background. This is because they usually have gone threw the same thing. I know when I get older our families and peers have the same expectations for us, to have a good job, going to school and find a good spouse. (Harnit, journal)

Both Jeetam and Harnit fear that they will be negatively influenced by those that are outsiders and unfamiliar to their Punjabi culture.

Many of the boys give similar rationales for why they choose the friends that they

do. Manraj, Harvir and Sanam cite sharing a common language, goals, morals, values and knowledge of shared home life experiences as the basis for their social groups. As

Manraj explains:

I choose to hang out with students of similar backgrounds because we can share the same interests. We speak the same language and can relate to each other's way of life at home and how they are dealing with it. I feel more comfortable discussing my family issues and or problems with a person who I know might have or will be going through the same problem. People of similar backgrounds can easily relate to one another and the comfort level between them is the reason why I hang out with Punjabis. (Manraj, journal).

Harvir expresses his views thus:

I choose to hang out with my friends because we share common goals and morals and interests that our parents have given us, and we won't be judged or made fun of for being "Brown." And for this reason all my friends get along. An example of a common goal is to be successful, go to university and have a career. Another reason why I hang out with my friends is because we all can speak Punjabi with each other and understand Indo Canadian issues such as crime, drinking and driving. (Harvir, journal)

Similarly Sanam states:

I choose to spend time with people of my own race more often because we have a lot in common and our life experiences are similar. Our values and morals are much the same which are passed down to us from our parents and grandparents and even though our upbringing might not be the same, we all share common

interests and that makes it easy for all of us to get along. (Sanam, journal)

Sanjiv alludes to an unspoken, presumably difficult to define, understanding between Punjabi friends as motive to sustain their relationships and value them more than others.

He explains:

I also choose to hang out with friends with similar backgrounds as me because there is a understanding between us that you cannot explain it to friends of different backgrounds. We are able to relate to each other easily. I feel more compatible being with friends of similar backgrounds. (Sanjiv, journal)

This feeling of ease and comfort that students feel with other Punjabi students is referred to often as the reason why these friendships are so valued.

While most of the students suggest an indefinable understanding of each other, or fear of peer pressure and negative influence from non-Punjabi students, Maskeen's response, as well as Harvir's above, is insightful since he contrasts what it is like being friends with the two different groups. He explains:

I choose to hang out with people of similar backgrounds because I'm not expected to fit any stereotypes. When I hang out with people of other cultures they are very ignorant about my culture and make jokes and comments that get really annoying. The jokes they make aren't meant to be disrespectful or offensive and I rarely take offence to them. However, hearing the same ignorant comments over and over gets really annoying. When I hang out with other brown guys, I am not expected to fit the stereotype of a "brown guy" because they know exactly what my culture is like. (Maskeen, journal)

His comment also highlights the important fact that while many of the students opt to be

surrounded by their Punjabi peers, they are not nor choose to be segregated from their non-Punjabi peers and many do have different peer groups that they spend their time with.

Not all of the students create their social networks based on their ethnic identities. Some have interests and hobbies that help them to befriend like-minded individuals and become part of affinity groups organized around attributes other than those that are ethnically defined. However, they do not seem to be like the majority of students, and even then, they may have different groups that they like to spend time with, some that are Punjabi and some that are not. Sanjiv, who as discussed earlier, does like to be friends with people from similar backgrounds, also has close-knit friendships with the players on his basketball team. He provides this account:

I see the players on my basketball team at school, then I see them at practice.

Being part of the basketball team a bond is built and you learn more about your friends. At times, you may think of the players on the basketball team as family.

As a team, all the hard things we go through together and being able to work our way through that the friendship becomes more important. (Sanjiv, journal)

This response is typical of most athletes, in general, that play on sports teams, and as the school team is made up of a diverse group of students, Punjabi students such as Sanjiv, are not hindered from making friends outside of their own ethnic group or expected not to have other friends. This suggests that many of the students are not opposed to having other, non-Punjabi friends and will create those relationships when and if the situation arises.

Kuljit was unique in the sense that she actively seeks out friends that are not

similar to her and instead, wants people that are different from her to help her expand her own horizons and understanding of the world. She states:

My friends are all from different backgrounds and cultures. I enjoy spending time with those that have not the same views as mine, but with those that have strong interest in the same field as me. Whether it is political, sports, or religious views, it doesn't matter, What matters is that they have knowledge, or a standing on their beliefs so that we can help each other advance and explore further. (Kuljit, journal)

This response was not typical at all and instead, reveals that it is her inquisitive and independent nature that dictates who she becomes friends with and why.

As almost a backlash to the group identity that many Punjabi students are inclined towards, Harjit offers her own perspective as to what that group identity means to her and why she does not choose to associate with her Punjabi peers, explaining that her adherence to Sikhism prevents her from being close to those who say they are religious but do not practice the religion as it should be. She reports:

I prefer to hang out with people who aren't brown or with similar backgrounds as me because I think most brown people are shallow. ... I feel more comfortable with people who admit and embrace their culture and race, like I have. Even if that isn't the case I prefer people who are understanding of the fact that I choose to be religious. ... sometimes I wish that I wasn't represented by the majority of brown people ... They don't represent me. (Harjit, journal)

Fitting in and not being judged is certainly one of the reasons that Punjabi students do choose to be friends with each other, and it could be perceived, that to some, making

choices about social groups based on your ethnic identity could be seen as being lazy or shallow, since true connections based on interests are being abandoned because easier options are available. An interesting point that Harjit makes is that she wishes she was not represented by the majority of brown people, revealing her own perceptions that she, and other “brown” people are judged, negatively, as a group, by those outside of the Punjabi community. Her comment that she prefers friends who are understanding of her religion, as discussed earlier, implies that other students not as religious as her, may be judgmental, or at the very least, uncomfortable with her religious beliefs, which do not necessarily coincide with the more secular views of many of the students.

It should be evident that none of the students in the study isolate themselves from people outside of their own culture but most do prefer to be with those that share the same ethnic heritage as them.

#### **4.5 Gender Differences and the Role of the Family**

The importance of the family appears to be a recurring theme with the participants of this study. Both the male and female students refer consistently and constantly to their families, and the expectations that are placed upon them, as well as the significant role that they play in their lives. Harnit, for example, when discussing the reasons why she prefers to have Punjabi friends rather than non-Punjabi friends, says “I know when I get older, our families and peers have the same expectations for us, to have a good job, going to school and find a good spouse.” (Harnit, journal). Her choices are dictated by the expectations that her family has for her future and rather than challenge them, she readily accepts her role in the family and consciously works towards fulfilling the duties

associated with that role.

Navjit also discusses her familial obligations and the importance of making her relatives proud and happy. She says:

I care a lot about my family and friends. I am really close with my cousins and I want to be a good role model to my younger cousins. I have a really close relationship with my mom, dad, and especially my grandma. ... I also care a lot about my twin (sister), I want her to be happy even if I am not. ... Another thing I care about is that my parents can trust me. I also like to spend time with my brother, because he has taught me how to play sports, and other stuff. (Navjit, journal)

Navjit wants her sister to be happy even if she is not, suggesting that in her life, her family's happiness is more valued than her own. This selfless and loyal behaviour is not atypical and instead mirrors many of the other student responses regarding family, indicative that Punjabi youth are taught to place their family first and always be concerned about how their actions will affect their family and family name.

The girls also reveal an aspect of obedience in their responses that is lacking in the responses of the boys, especially when it comes to their parents and siblings. Harnit explains that she is living her life in way that will fulfill her family's expectations for her and Navjit says that she wants her parents to trust her, both implicitly revealing their need to be seen as good by their families and, in return, loved and respected. Harjit's response is much more overt:

My family has impacted my life more than anything else. In my family I play the role of a daughter who is expected to respect and love her parents. I am also the

younger, annoying sister, and have to put up with and obey my brother. (Harjit, journal)

To respect, love and obey is what an ideal daughter does and she does not discuss ways that she impacts her family.

Mandeep, through her project, brings to light the extent of influence family can have. She explains:

One of the most important identities I have is as a daughter. I am very important to my parents because I am their one and only daughter. ... Being a daughter means a lot to me, before talking back to my parents, I'll always think back and realize all the things they have done for me. I can do anything for my parents ... I identify myself as a sister as well because I am the only sister to my only brother. My brother and I are very close and probably would not be able to live without each other. I follow everything one should do as a sister. (Mandeep, Identity project)

Mandeep has a sense of gratitude for her parents that impacts her relationship with them and keeps her from disappointing them with inappropriate behaviour. For some of the girls, their identities as sisters and daughters inform the decisions they make on a day-to-day basis and impact their lives, even their hobbies and interests. This way, families can ensure that their daughters are finding appropriate and acceptable ways to spend their time rather than participating in activities that they do not approve of. For Mandeep, this means baking and being a Canucks fan. She states:

Another way to identify myself is, as a Baker. I really enjoy cooking but most of all baking. That is why I took baking in school this year and am also taking it next

year as well. As much as I love baking I love decorating cakes as well. Anyone that knows me well enough, whenever they think of baked goods, they will think of me. I get this passion for baking from my mom, she taught me many things about it. I always help her and ask for advice when I am cooking something.

(Mandeep, Identity project)

She is emulating her mother and thereby maintaining her status as a good daughter, while still spending her time doing something she enjoys. “I was born in Vancouver and so was the team Vancouver Canucks. I’ve been watching hockey ever since I was born, and this is because my whole family watches it.” (Mandeep, Identity project). Her passion for the Canucks was created and sustained by her family, therefore, is an acceptable identity for her to have, as is being a baker. The amount of influence families exert over girls is immense and what makes this even more surprising is that there seems to be no resentment by any of the girls towards the expectations that they are expected to live up to.

Parents are not the only influencing figures mentioned by the girls as being important. Navjit mentions her grandparents and cousins and she, Harjit, and Mandeep discuss their siblings, especially the role that their older brothers play in guiding them. As discussed earlier when examining the student’s group identities, parents encourage their children to maintain close relationships with those that they know and are close to. The parents also model this behaviour from when the children are young by socializing with their relatives rather than letting children play with friends made at school, so that as students get older, their closest friends are sometimes their own cousins, or family friends. This could also account for why many of the student’s prefer to spend time with

other Punjabi's. Kuljit's identity project attests to the strength of the relationship between siblings and cousins by discussing the impact that they have had on her life. She says:

My childhood, basically ... there are three main people that made it my childhood. Sukh (my cousin), her brother, my brother and me. The four of us did everything together. We were always with our family. ... All of it defines who I am. If one of them was missing, I would be a different person and to this day we are still super tight. (Kuljit, Identity project)

The point that Kuljit makes about the four of them always being with their family is quite telling of how parents maintain traditional Punjabi culture and values. From a young age, children are encouraged to socialize with cousins and family friends and, through this, are taught the importance of family and the morals and values associated with it.

Kuljit's perspective on her family is quite unique in that she discusses how her parents play a role in her life and reveals a sense of agency in her relationship with them. She explains:

My parents gave me a reason to be proud to be Indian. They try to support my decisions and they try to adapt to my needs, even though they are not super good at it, but they try. They taught me about respect and to live in peace and to appreciate what help I have and to give whatever I can. And they are my foundation, to what I have now, I just add to the top of it. (Kuljit, Identity project)

Her explanation suggests that she has a dialogue with her parents about what is important to her and has some say in how she is raised. This is an aspect that is not present in the work of many of the other students.

The expectations placed upon the participants by family are accepted and not

often questioned and are instead considered to be duties that need to be fulfilled, because of this, gender inequalities are continuously perpetuated and accepted. More of the girls than boys discussed the dependency on and need for their families and often did so with greater depth. They also revealed an understanding that they are responsible for making their parents happy with their actions, both in the present and in the future. Respect from the family is also vital to the boys but what they do to achieve it is not necessarily the same as what the girls do. Some of the boys do speak of their families but many of the boys focused more on their friends as being a source of comfort and support. The ones who do mention their families, such as Harvir and Sanam, speak of them with respect, but also assume a more assertive identity when discussing their relationship with them.

Harvir was one of the few boys to discuss his family and for him, his family is of utmost importance and was central to Harvir throughout this identity unit. “I am responsible and trustworthy. I am a son, brother, cousin and uncle. ... I am Indo-Canadian. I am the youngest boy in my family. I would give up my life for my family and friends” (Harvir, Identity project). His statement that he would give up his life for his family and friends can be compared with Navjit’s statement that she wants her sister to be happy even if she is not. While Navjit hopes her actions will make her family happy and proud of her, Harvir’s comment reveals a mentality of needing to protect the family and making them proud through his willingness to sacrifice himself for them.

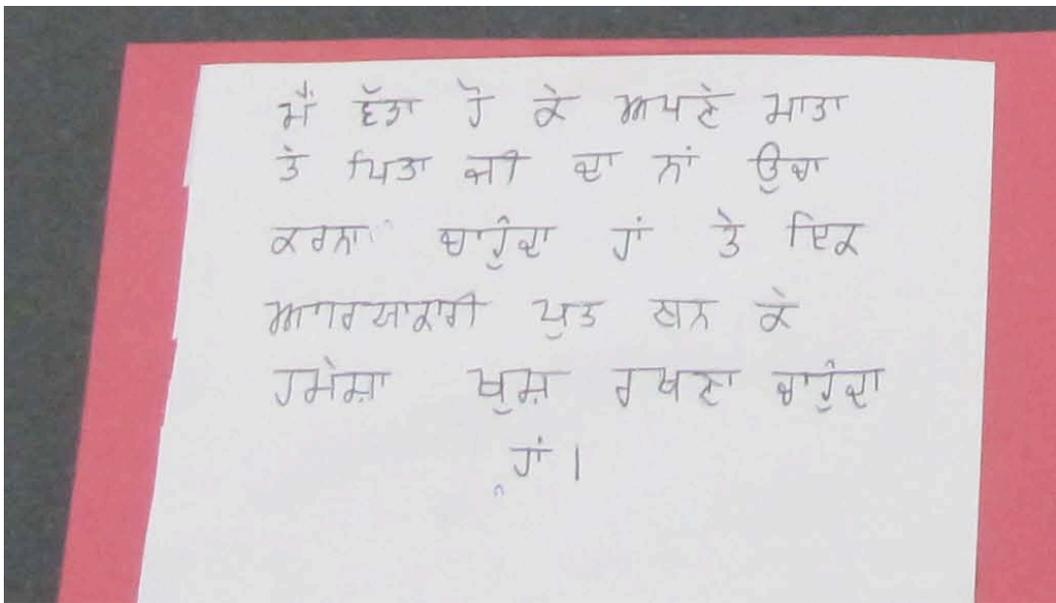
The only other boy for whom family was a main theme through the unit was Sanam, and his comments on family were the ones that matched most closely with those of the girls. He writes:

I am a caring individual. I put others feelings into consideration before my own

and I try to be as unselfish as I can. Family is extremely important to me and they are a big reason why I am where I am in life today” “ਮੈਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਮਾਤਾ ਤੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਉਚਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਇਕ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ ਪੁਤ ਬਨ ਕੇ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਖੁਸ਼ ਰਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ।” Translation: “When I grow up, I want to make my mother and father proud by raising the status of their name by being an obedient son who always keeps his parents happy” (Sanam, Identity project).

He speaks of being obedient and putting his family before himself, much like the girls do. However, he deviates from the girls when he speaks of wanting to raise the status of his family name. Whereas the girls are wanting to make their parents happy and live up to the expectations that their parents have for them, Sanam expresses a desire to impress his family and wants go above and beyond his family’s current accomplishments in order to do so. Sanam’s goal suggests that he is autonomous and wants to make his family happy by what he achieves in life.

**Figure 4.8 Image taken from Sanam’s identity project**



Loyalty towards one's family is a recurring theme with the students. They want to make their families proud and feel obligated to be obedient and respectful. "I respect my mother the most because she works seven days a week and supports my brother and I." (Sanjiv, journal). This respect is not unfounded or misplaced. The students see their parents as being hard-working and dedicated to them. They realize the sacrifices that their parents make are for them. In turn, they try to please their parents, if not by their immediate actions, then by what they hope to achieve in their imagined future.

#### **4.6 Individual Identities**

While the students in this study describe themselves as being part of the collectives of community and family, they are also a unique and diverse group. They have individual interests and passions that set them apart from each other and the examination of these aspects of their identity help to enrich our understanding of who they really are and perceive themselves to be. Kuljit, whose insights in the previous sections have been especially introspective, is a keen volunteer and zealous reader. She explains:

Community Involvement. I feel obligated to contribute to the society in which I live, I am currently involved in the following: St Michaels Senior Home, United Nations Connections Club, Gobind Sarvar Sikh School, Vancouver Aquarium, Science World Fun Run. I like to make use of any free time that I have. I'm also an avid reader, books give perspectives of the world. You read it and it's like you are there. It's like extra knowledge. (Kuljit, Identity project)

Her eagerness for knowledge and new experiences is evident and keeps her from taking

the easy route, both in choosing her peer groups and how she spends her free time.

**Figure 4.9 Image taken from Kuljit's identity project**



Harjit also identifies herself as a reader and credits reading for sustaining a curiosity about the world that her parents ignited. She states:

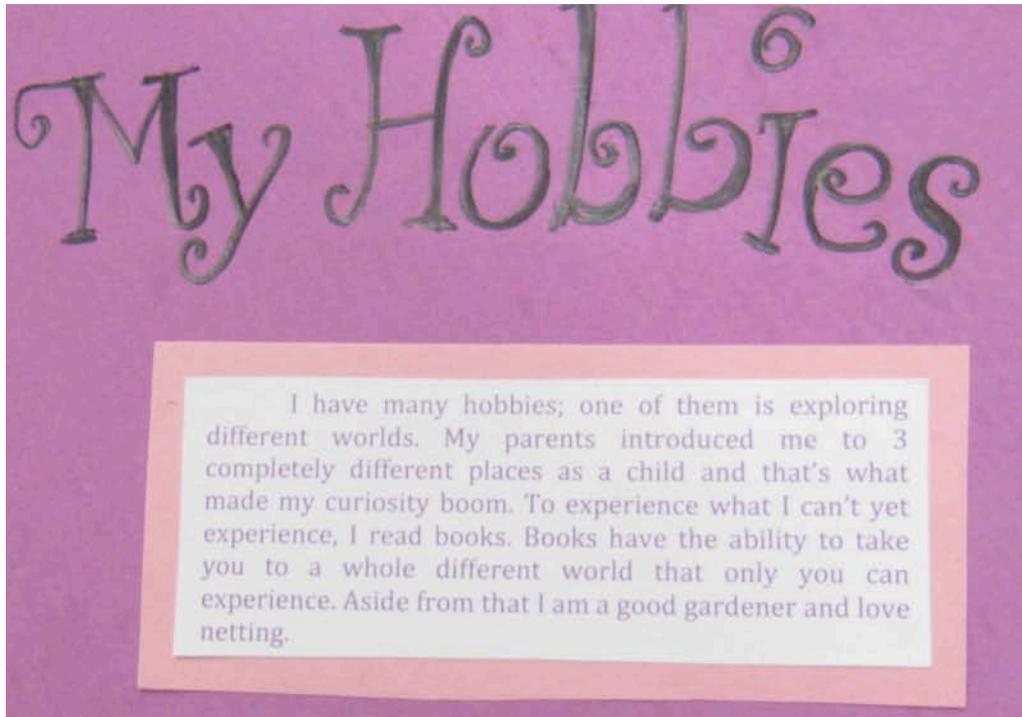
I have many hobbies; one of them is exploring different worlds. My parents introduced me to 3 completely different places as a child and that's what made my curiosity boom. To experience what I can't yet experience, I read books. Books have the ability to take you to a whole different world that you can experience.

(Harjit, Identity project)

Rather than be confined to the immediate world, Harjit and Kuljit utilize books as a means to explore the world beyond their own doorsteps and live vicariously through the characters and stories that they read, until they can go out and see the world for

themselves.

**Figure 4.10 Image #2 taken from Harjit's identity project**



Mandeep's interests and hobbies, as discussed earlier, are a means to maintain close connections with her family but also help to understand who she is and what she values in life. She explains:

Another way to identify myself is, as a Baker. I really enjoy cooking but most of all baking. That is why I took baking in school this year and am also taking it next year as well. As much as I love baking, I love decorating cakes as well. Anyone that knows me well enough, whenever they think of baked goods, they will think of me. I get this passion for baking from my mom, she taught me many things about it. I always help her and ask for advice when I am cooking something.

(Mandeep, Identity project)

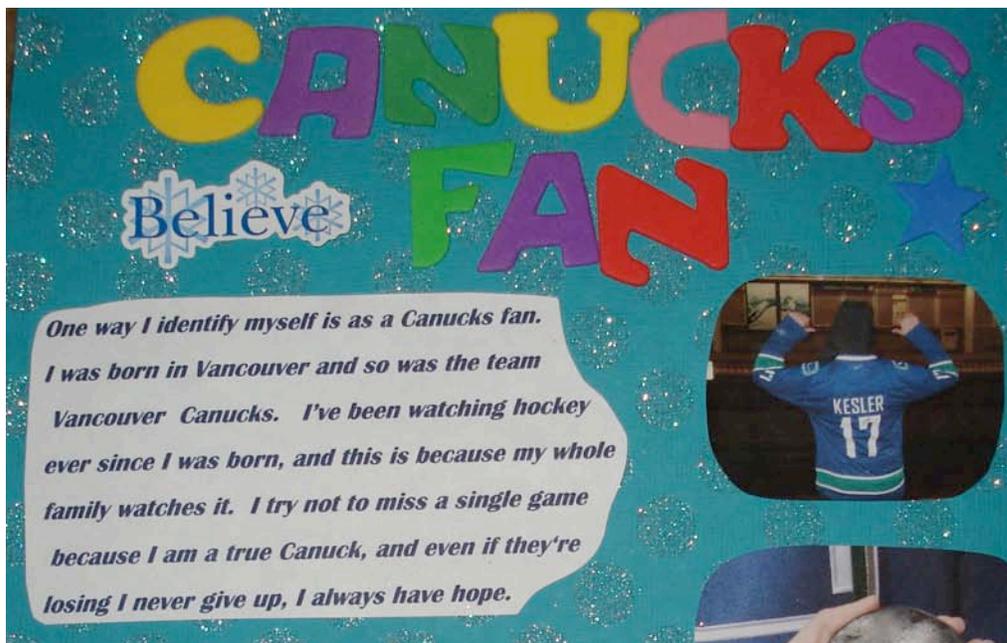
For Mandeep, baking is an area that she excels in and enjoys, and is proud that, to her

friends, she is synonymous with baked goods. As well, she is a devoted Canucks fan:

One way I identify myself is as a Canucks fan. I was born in Vancouver and so was the team Vancouver Canucks. I've been watching hockey ever since I was born, and this is because my whole family watches it. I try not to miss a single game, losing I never give up, I always have hope because I am a true Canuck and even if they're losing, I still have hope. (Mandeep, Identity project)

Mandeep's own optimistic and cheerful nature is revealed in her loyalty to a team that means so much to her.

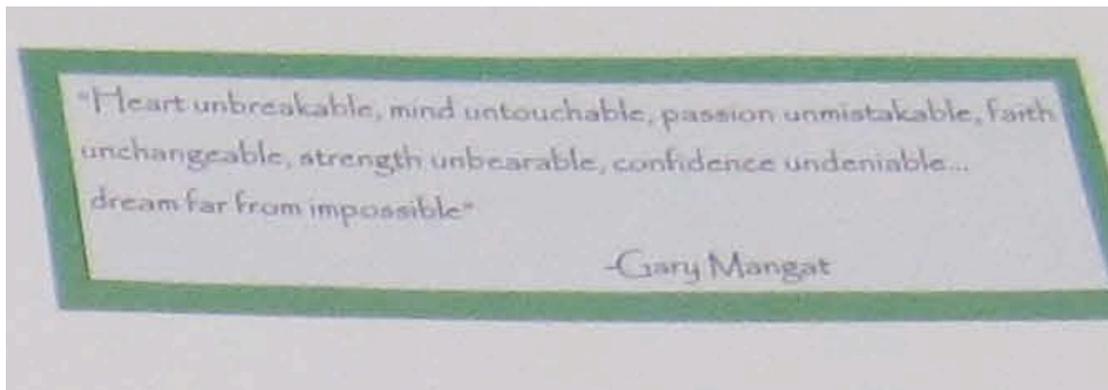
**Figure 4.11 Image #3 taken from Mandeep's identity project**



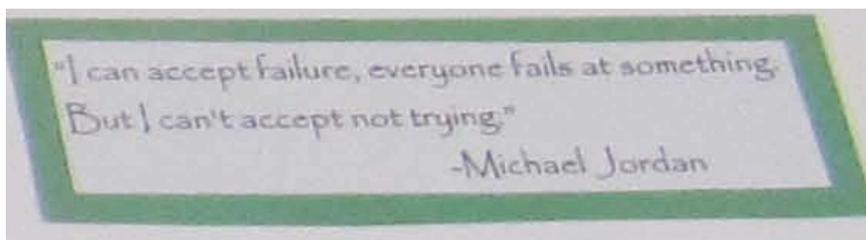
Sanjiv is an athlete who is devoted to basketball and the school basketball team. The dedication that he has for the sport is a positive facet of his life. "I enjoy playing basketball, it helps me not get into bad things. I practice basketball to become the best I

can possibly become and become a good role model for younger kids.” ...“Being part of the basketball team, a bond is built ...At times you may think of the players on the basketball team as family.” (Sanjiv, journal). Basketball reveals Sanjiv’s determination, and when discussing the importance of it in his life in his Identity project, he shared some quotes that he relies on daily to keep himself focused, quotes from his idols that he hopes to one day emulate. “Heart unbreakable, mind untouchable, passion unmistakable, faith unchangeable, strength unbearable, confidence undeniable...dream far from impossible.” Gary Mangat (Indo-Canadian mixed martial arts fighter). “I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can’t accept not trying.” Michael Jordan (basketball player). For Sanjiv, basketball is more than a sport, it’s a way to live his life and he applies what he learns on the court to his entire life and that is evident in all that he says and does.

**Figure 4.12 Image taken from Sanjiv’s identity project**



**Figure 4.13 Image #2 taken from Sanjiv’s identity project**



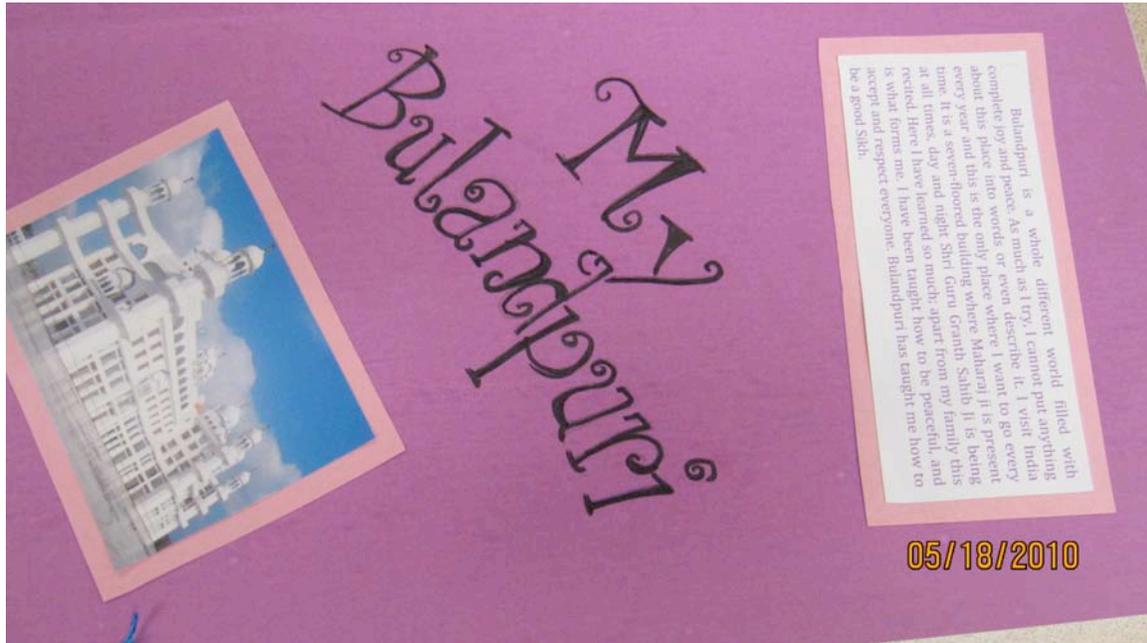
Like other people their age, the participants in this study have a multitude of interests that inform us about their past experiences and well as their future hopes and goals. Harvir is passionate about technology, especially computers, and is focused on having a career in that industry. His day-to-day life is consumed by all matters electronic and within the class and his friends, he is the “go-to guy” whenever anyone needs help. “I am techy, I love technology and love video games. . . . I am a Mac user” (Harvir, journal). Unlike many other students his age, he is completely sure of what he wants to be when he grows up and has already started taking steps to become that person.

Many of the students travel with their families quite often and enjoy it immensely, and parents generally take their children on holidays to the homes of their relatives in order to maintain family relationships. Punjabi’s from India immigrated to places such as England, the USA and Canada. One of the participants in this study was actually born in England and his parents moved to Canada when he was young so that they could be closer to their relatives. Other students look forward to school breaks and family events such as weddings where they get to visit their relatives or their relatives come to visit them. “I really like to travel. Places that I have been to are California (drove through Washington and Oregon to get there), England, India, Montreal. . . .I lived in California for almost a year during grade 8 [with family that lives there].” (Parveen, Identity project). For Harjit, travel is a way to maintain her connection to her religion and guru. She explains:

Bulandpuri is a whole different world filled with complete joy and peace. As much as I try, I cannot put anything about this place into words or even describe it. I visit India every year and this is the only place where I want to go every time.



**Figure 4.15 Image #3 taken from Harjit's identity project**



This chapter reveals the different themes that emerged from the data produced by the students in the study. The major themes highlighted by the data were the students notions of identity as they related to being Punjabi and Canadian, their perceptions of Sikh religion and Punjabi culture, the Punjabi language, as well as their group or peer network identities, the gender differences, the role of the family and their own individual identities, based on their interests and hobbies. Chapter five will look at the limitations of the study, future areas of research, implications for pedagogy and discuss these findings in greater detail, connecting them back to the research questions, which were:

1. What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home?
2. What factors figure prominently in the constructions of their identity?
3. Does learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?

## **Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications**

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings reported in the previous chapter and how they relate to both the literature discussed in chapter two and the research questions. The research questions are:

1. What are some of the ways that Indo-Canadian students negotiate their identities within the different domains of school and home?
2. What factors figure prominently in the constructions of their identity?
3. Does learning Punjabi fit into an imagined identity that the students want for themselves?

As well, the limitations of the study, future areas of research, and implications for pedagogy are addressed in this chapter.

### **5.1 Discussion of the Findings**

One of the central themes that emerged from the data is of the importance of family in the identity formation of Indo-Canadian teens. Norton (2000) states that a person negotiates their multiple identities according to the different settings and different relationships that exist in their reality. For the participants in this study, family and the expectations, both for the present and the future, imposed on them by, most often, their parents, siblings and grandparents are critical in their identity formation. They are eager to fulfill those expectations, making their families happy and proud. Adding to this is Norton's concept of investment and imagined communities, where learning Punjabi means having the necessary resources to participate more fully in their heritage community (2005). The participants are so keen on living up to the expectations required

of them that they cannot see their futures without connecting back to their families. More than half of the students explained that they lived their lives according to the values, morals and goals given to them by their family. Harnit, Mandeep, Navjit, Harjit, Harvir, and Sanam all make similar statements when discussing the role that family plays in shaping who they are.

Harnit's choice of friends in high school is guided by societal expectations of what her future should be like and she does not question or challenge those imposed expectations, instead she sees herself as having the same expectations as well. Mandeep's role as both a daughter and sister are the most important ways that she perceives herself, saying that she would do anything for her parents and could not live without her brother. Navjit's construction of identity is closely tied into her familial relationships, extending to her grandparents and cousins, by being a good role model and making others in her family, even at the cost of her own happiness. And Harjit, who is very aware of what her role as a daughter and sister entails, obligingly accepts it and works hard to live up to her family's expectations of her.

The girls above discussed the importance of their families from a position of obedience and do not question the choices their parents make or want for them. This is contrasted with the male students in the study, who still respect their parents, but show more independence in their future plans and how they perceive they will make their parents happy, as well, whereas the females seek comfort and support from their families, the males receive it more from their friends.

Harvir discusses the importance of his family but puts himself in a protector position, by saying that he would sacrifice himself for his family, thereby giving him

power and dominance even though he is the youngest boy in the family. While the girls state that they go to their families for help, Harvir is positioning himself as a person who others in the family can go to for comfort and support, who would sacrifice his own life for his family members. Part of his identity is based on his importance as a male within his family.

Sanam echoes Harvir's sentiments, as well as those of the females, by discussing the importance of his family but, like Harvir, suggests that he is a caretaker within the family, not just for the other members but for the family name as well. So while he is obedient and wanting to make his parents happy, unlike the girls, both he and Harvir also perceive themselves as having positions of power where they can protect their families and by elevating the family name to increase both family status and honour.

The impact that familial expectations and obligations have on the students in this study is very evident, with their wishes to be contributing and respected members of their families comprising a large portion of how they imagine themselves in the future. However, with this family identity comes a group identity where the students participating in this study choose their friendships based partly on what their family's expectations are of them and partly on the fact that they feel a disconnect between themselves and other cultures, which while not completely divisive is not as comfortable as being friends with other Punjabi or similar background students. These findings reinforce Xiao's (1998), where the networks created by friends and family were crucial to heritage language maintenance and their own cultural identity. Tatum (1997) suggests that in such situations students are creating oppositional identities based on their ethnicity. As they become adolescents, many minority students become aware of the

ethnic differences between themselves and other students, leading to situations of self-segregation since they are looking for answers as to what it means to be their particular ethnicity and not part of the mainstream White “norm” society where they do not see themselves represented accurately or equally. Tatum (1997) sees this self-segregation as being somewhat positive since it prevents isolation and increases the opportunities that a teen has for understanding and empathy from their peers at such a tumultuous and confusing period in their lives, where they can share with each other the unexplainable, indefinable ways they may feel left out of society.

An aspect of the participant’s identities that became apparent through this study was that many of the students chose their friendships based along ethnic, religious and cultural lines. Sanam, Manraj, and Harvir all stated the reason for this as having the same morals, values, and family expectations as other Punjabis/Indians and being able to talk about issues going on at home with others who may have experienced similar problems at home. Harvir does point out that he likes to hang out with other Punjabis, saying that he knows he will not be teased for being Punjabi or brown skinned. Echoing Harvir’s comments about feeling more comfortable in a group where your ethnicity is not the basis for being singled out, Maskeen comments indicate that there is a certain “otherness” that the males feel in their relationships with friends from other ethnicities that is not as natural as being friends with other Punjabis. Maskeen suggests that there are cultural assumptions and expectations made by non-Punjabi students that, while not offensive, can be irritating and repetitive and could possibly impede the creation of meaningful friendships. This supports Tatum’s (1997) theory that part of the reason for self-segregation by ethnicity is to remove oneself from the racist gaze and influence; the

grouping together of these young Punjabi teens could be seen as a reaction to the stress and tension they feel from the subtle, racist undertones of seemingly friendly interactions with non-Punjabi friends. When they are with friends from similar backgrounds to their own, this becomes less of an issue and they are able to themselves and possibly, in some cases, have deeper relationships, yet it is important to note that the students also do have friends of other backgrounds, as shown by Maskeen, Sanjiv and Harvir. As Giampapa (2001) found, the participants in here study were able to draw on a wide range of identities, which do shift and are fluid in nature, depending on what aspects of themselves are best suited for any given situation. This is much like the students in this study, who may have preferences for one peer network over another but do isolate themselves. Instead, they appear to make other friends based on their varied interests, such as sports or video games, and they do still maintain their social groups from elementary school, who are often those that live closest to them.

While the students above try and explain that the reason they choose to have friends of the same ethnicity is because their friends all share the same values, morals, language, home lives and goals, it is evident that there are forces at play which the students either cannot define or are not yet aware of. Sanjiv tries to pinpoint this indescribable feeling that many of the students kept referring to throughout the unit but where unable to. Sanjiv, who has several different groups of friends, still feels most at ease with other Punjabi students.

At the essence of this theme is the notion that the study participants suggest that there are significant, difficult to explain differences between cultures that can prevent people from wholly accepting people from other cultures as being the same, whether or

not this is true is not within the scope of this study but why these perceptions exist may be explained by some of the participant responses.

Parents are responsible for the socialization of their children at a young age, and this is especially true of immigrant parents who may not be fully integrated into society, such as Punjabi immigrants in Canadian society. Many families from Punjab who immigrated to Canada or Britain perceived western society as being less than positive, where people were apt to engage in risky behaviour (sexual and criminal), disrespect their elders and become independent at the cost of the family's happiness since they felt there was a contradiction between the two culture (Ames & Inglis, 1974; Dosanjh, 1997; Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998). These immigrant families saw their own traditional system and practices as being superior to the western culture they most often only observed on television and in the movies. Those same misperceptions are presented by some of the students in the study.

Jeetam says her choice to only be friends with other Punjabi/Indian students is based on her perceptions that White people are not the same as her and her friends. The assumption here is that Jeetam has been taught that a White person's values and morals are essentially the opposite of her own, and that they will lead her down a path of poor choices and behaviour. There is no indication that she believes a White person would understand why she needs to be home by a certain time and instead paints all White people negatively as the same. Harnit voices the same concerns with her and explains that Punjabis have similar morals, which are unlike any other culture or ethnicity.

While these girls cannot be blamed for wanting to be well-behaved and as "good" by their families, it is clear that somewhere in their upbringing they were raised to believe

that they were inherently different from others, mainly those associated with the dominant, White mainstream society within which they live. What can be understood from this is that parents, wanting their children to be kept safe from such “immoral” behaviour would attempt to bias their children against western society, and specifically, White people. There is also the possibility that there is a fear that they will not fit in with people of other ethnicities, or that they do not have the same freedoms that other girls their age have and that girls such as Jeetam and Harnit do not want to have to explain to people why they aren’t allowed out late or allowed to date. By choosing to be friends with other Punjabis, there are no awkward conversations or expectations to behave in ways that could result in them getting into trouble with their families. As well, this isolation from other ethnicities prevents the girls from questioning themselves and the values and traditions that informed their upbringing, thwarting any possible conflicts they could encounter that may alter how they perceive themselves within their community, their families and with their friends.

However, not all of the students in this study chose their friendships based on ethnicity. As mentioned earlier, some of the students had different groups of friends, some being Punjabi, others not. Kuljit chooses her friends from different backgrounds and cultures purposefully, so as to increase her own knowledge of the world. And Harjit’s explanation of why she is not friends with other Punjabi students is quite oppositional to the rest of the students in this study, perceiving “brown” people to be shallow and all alike. Her response is quite telling in that most Punjabi students do perceive a difference between their culture and other cultures, and that they stick together because of it. Of course, not everyone is alike and in this case, Harjit is frustrated by what

she sees as an attempt for “Brown” people to all be alike, and does not feel that they represent who she is. She even states that it is her religion, Sikhism, of which she is a devout follower that makes her feel apart from the other students at her high school. Possibly, her comfort and her security in her religion provide her enough guidance and support that, unlike Tatum’s theory that adolescents depend on each other for such, she does not need a Punjabi peer group to help her define who she is or her place in the world.

Another important note about both Kuljit and Harjit is that they are both avid readers, who use books to learn about the world and experience it in ways that they are unable to do so with their own lives. This outlet for learning and understanding the world and society could also explain their lack of need Punjabi friends to support them, essentially they have outgrown their need for such peer groups by having access to resources (books) which provide them with the answers they need and are looking for. None of the other students in the study listed reading as being of any importance to them but both Kuljit and Harjit had books as one of the focal points of their Identity projects.

Norton (2005) makes the point that acquiring the target language also means acquiring the wealth of resources that go with it, including access into the desired imagined communities. The access to learning Punjabi in high school is a privileged and limited one that the students in this study benefited from. The participants have access to other Punjabi and Indian students in their high school. They are also able to take Punjabi in high school, and have access to media such as the Internet, television, movies and music where they can access Punjabi culture, language and Sikh religion. For other Punjabi Canadians, who do not have all of these resources available to them, or may be

one of only a few Punjabi Canadians in their high school, there may be sites of conflict regarding their identity and their relationships with their families that are not present here. By being surrounded by other students that they think are like them and understand them, the students in this study have a peer support group that may prevent them from rebelling or questioning their upbringing, at least while they are in high school.

As discussed earlier, Punjabi students tend to gravitate towards another and take comfort and find support in their friendships with one another. Through this, they create a group identity that reinforces their own notions of what it means to be a Punjabi teen growing up in Canada. Chow (2001) argues that by maintaining a heritage language, individuals are also strengthening their bonds with their heritage culture, and the increased frequency of opportunities to use the language, as well as accessibility to the same ethnicity friends (and potential marriage partners) increases the success of ethnic rediscovery but heritage language loss means the erosion of one's own ethnic identification and contributes to a lack of academic success.

Family and friendships were the motivators for the participants in Xiao's (1998) study to maintain their heritage language but schools teaching Chinese to the participants were not effective, instead the schools were beneficial in providing a space for the formation of a cultural group identity. However, unlike Xiao's study, the students in this study did succeed in acquiring literacy skills in their heritage language. This could be because the students had access to Punjabi peer groups prior to taking Punjabi and did not need to have a space created for them for that specific reason. Or the schools in Xiao's study were imposed on the participants, whereas in this study, the students chose to take Punjabi, and if they and other students who did not choose to take Punjabi were forced to

attend community schools to learn Punjabi, the results may have been different. This was the case with Chumak-Horbatsch's (1999) study where the participants resisted their families' attempts to maintain their Ukrainian heritage, possibly because they were exposed to Ukrainian both at home and school and were unable to make choices regarding the manner in which could maintain their heritage language and culture. The students in this study do not resent taking Punjabi in school, rather they appear to embrace it.

It is evident that family plays an essential role in the maintenance of a heritage language. In Guardado's (2009) study, parents were the main reason why the children were able to learn and practice their Spanish. They provided an opportunity for their children to have authentic experiences in Spanish, which facilitated their language learning. His study also points at the need for the child to have some sense of agency in their heritage language development. These two factors help create a learning environment where heritage language maintenance is accessible and possible. These two factors also exist for the students in this study. Prior to taking Punjabi, the students had already been taught about their culture, and religion, they could understand casual, spoken Punjabi and some could even read and write. This education came from their families and the student's links to their heritage were strong enough that they wanted to learn Punjabi in a high school class.

Harjit, in her identity project, explicitly lays out her reasons for learning Punjabi, explaining that is so vital to maintaining her faith. Her motivation for learning Punjabi is so that she can read the Sikh Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib for herself and therefore, read the actual words written by those who contributed to the religion. As religion and

family play such a critical role in her life, it is unlikely that with such investment, Harjit's desire to learn and maintain her heritage language will be diminishing at any point in the near future.

As well, Sanam, in his identity project, chose to express his more traditional view of being a son in Punjabi and not in English, suggesting that there is a direct connection between his use of Punjabi and his imagined community, where he makes his parents happy by being an obedient and respectable son, and raising the status of the family name.

The students themselves are active agents in preventing a disconnect between themselves and their ethnic roots, especially by surrounding themselves with friends who speak Punjabi and taking it as a high school elective. Certainly, it can be argued that the parents of the participants in this study have taken steps to ensure that their heritage and culture are successfully passed on to their children, as previously mentioned.

The study took place in a Punjabi high school classroom in metro Vancouver with a significant population of Punjabis, although by no means a majority population within the school of 1750 students. However, there were enough students interested in taking Punjabi that classes were offered and one of the main reasons given by the students for wanting to take the class was being able to communicate with family and understand the music and television shows recorded and broadcast in Punjabi. While most of the students taking Punjabi are already bicultural, they are not necessarily bilingual, or at least not as proficient in Punjabi as they would like to be. Mills (2001) found that students wanted to learn Punjabi in order to fulfill societal expectations of them, being able to speak Punjabi to family members is considered being respectful and also allows

one to communicate with family members who cannot speak English, such as grandparents and relatives still living in Punjab. The fulfillment of familial expectations and the high status of family for the students suggests that Mills study was in line with the findings of this study in that perspective, however, at least with the participants in this study, it appeared that the students had bicultural identities, rejecting Mills notion that most individuals identify with only one of the two cultures they exist in (2001). Rather what was apparent through this study was that the students have complex, multi-identities which they are able to access as the situation demands, whether it be their Punjabi or Canadian identity, or their athletic or academic or adventurous identity, as demonstrated through the concept of situational ethnicity (Hall, 1996; Kalsi, 2003).

As discussed earlier, Harnit, Mandeep, Navjit, Harjit and Navjit clearly explain their reliance and need on family for approval and inclusion. As discussed in Marshall and Toohey (2010), the young children's depictions of women in their storybooks often followed the traditional gender roles that their grandparent's were taught in India back in the 1940's and 1950's. These children are exposed to these same expectations for women both at home, through stories and also through the modeling of their grandparents who are often their caretakers while their parents are at work. It is possible that these same children may then internalize these roles and wish to reproduce as a way to make their parents happy. While Kalsi (2003) found that there were issues with the bicultural identity of Punjabi women in Canada due to the inherent differences in the Canadian and Punjabi value systems, the participants in this study do not support those findings. They seem to be content and, for the most part, accept the roles and duties ascribed to them. The participants in Kalsi's study were adult women, whereas these participants are

teenagers, so possibly the teens have not experienced enough sites of conflict between the two cultures to consider them as being issues. As well, the participants in this study are of a different generation than those in Kalsi's study so it could be the parents of the participants who may identify more with the women in Kalsi's study, and since they shared the same issues, they have found ways to breach the gap between the two cultures for their parents, possibly by teaching their daughter's about the positive aspects of their culture and religion, as with Harjit, with her adherence to Sikhism and as Kalsi suggests, by encouraging inter-generational dialogue, as Kuljit does.

Kuljit describes her relationship with her parents honestly and critically, citing her reliance and need for them in contrast with the reality of the fact that not everything is perfect. She acknowledges that there is a disconnect between what her parents expect and what she wants, as with most teenagers, yet she indicates that there is a working relationship between them where communication is present to ensure that both sides are heard and that both sides attempt to reconcile the gap between them. Yet she connects her life to the foundation her parents have built for her and she will continue to build her identity on what already exists through the constant negotiations between her and her parents. There is no suggestion that her identity, which is so intrinsically tied to her family, is problematic for her and one that she resists in any way.

As the students cite their love for their families and reveal little evidence of conflict between them and their parents, possibly the idea that parents are recognizing the difficulty their children have in accepting two oppositional cultures has led them to be more open to Canadian culture and seek to find ways to balance the expectations of their heritage culture with the reality of the culture within which they were born and live

(Dosanjh, 1997; Dosanjh & Ghuman). However, there is also a possibility that the parents are, as mentioned earlier, teaching and biasing their children towards certain aspects of Punjabi culture, and thereby against Canadian culture in certain ways to prevent dissent and rebellion later on in their lives. An example of this is the student's views on caste and marriage.

A significant number of the participants in the study identified themselves by their caste and said they were proud of it and that it was as important a defining characteristic of their identities as being Punjabi, or Canadian. Ranjot's identity project, for example, was dedicated entirely to his identity as being Punjabi, Jatt and a Sikh. He made no mention of his Canadian identity, despite the fact that Canada is where he was born and raised. While there are inherent and obvious issues with calling yourself a Sikh and being a Jatt, there was no indication that Ranjot, or students such as Navjit or Parveen, felt any conflict in adhering to two distinctly adversarial ideologies, which as explained by Ames and Inglis (1974) is quite common for most secular Punjabi Sikhs. The striking aspect of this is that while studies done in 1974 on first generation Punjabi Sikhs would certainly show remnants of Punjabi village mentality, in 2010, in a Canadian classroom, for these second generation students to be able to name their caste and for most to say, proudly, that their caste was important to them, enough that they would not consider marrying outside of it, suggests that parents are doing a good job of maintaining their culture through their child rearing practices, and ensuring that their values are passed down to future generations. As well, by teaching their children about the importance of such things as the caste system, the parents are limiting the chances that their children will attempt to marry outside of their caste, let alone anyone that is a non-Punjabi.

## **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

This study sought to understand the multi-identities of second and third generation Indo-Canadian students. The participants selected for the study were in their second year of learning Punjabi in high school. Inherently, by doing this, the students chosen already had attachments to their heritage language and culture, and are, in a sense, self-selected. The selection of this group automatically excluded from the study all Indo-Canadian students who did not choose to learn their heritage language as part of their high school experiences. So while the participants are a diverse group of students, they do not begin to represent the entire spectrum of Indo-Canadian students and what their identities are nor their views on their culture and ethnicity. As well, the group chosen was quite small and in the future, a larger sample from a wider selection of students would be beneficial.

As the data shows, the participants show respect for their families and wish to make them happy. Because of this, the data could be skewed as students, afraid of embarrassing or making their families look bad, may not have discussed issues or aspects of their lives that could have painted their families or culture in a negative light. The data in this study could be affected by the biases that the students may consciously or unconsciously hold.

## **5.3 Implications for Pedagogy**

The scan of a Punjabi Sikh community done by Smythe and Toohey (2009) and the study by Marshall and Toohey (2010) suggests that there is an urgent need for educators to understand the children that they teach. Their study shows that due to

pressures of immigration and the limitations of many families in terms of time and money, Punjabi Sikh children do not always arrive in the classroom with same literacy and language practices as other students, and that these multi lingual, multi modal, multi literate students need to be seen as such in the classroom. Sometimes, the knowledge that they do bring with them is contradictory to what is perceived as normal by North American standards and highlights the need to bridge the gap in cultural understanding. In high school, Punjabi students stick together and listen and dance to Bhangra and, in many ways, are bicultural. Part of the reason for this, as shown by the participants in this study, is that they feel there is a disconnect between them and other students. As a classroom teacher, it is important to acknowledge those perceptions and work at creating a truly multicultural environment, where the similarities between all students are valued and noticed more than their differences.

As well, through this study we see that learning about Punjabi language and culture is important to many Punjabi Canadian teens, and that efforts need to be made to ensure that these students have opportunities to learn about them, such as through the Punjabi classes offered. In addition to this, as discussed by Dosanjh (1997) more resources need to be created for such Punjabi classes so that the students have sufficient support in learning about and maintaining their heritage culture and language.

#### **5.4 Directions for future research**

As mentioned in the previous section, the students in this study were self-selected in the sense that they had already invested in their heritage culture and language by taking Punjabi for the second year in high school. Further investigation is needed into the

identities of Indo-Canadian teens who were not and would not fall into this group of students. Would those students express the same ideas regarding Punjabi language and culture, family, friends and their religion? Would their upbringings be similar to those of the participants or was it the influence of friends and family that led the study participants to take Punjabi in the first place?

Also, since Ames and Inglis's (1974) study, there does not appear to have been any major studies undertaken looking at the Punjabi or Punjabi Sikh families in British Columbia closely. My findings suggest that in areas such as religion and attitudes towards the caste system, there has been very little change within the majority of the population, although a larger study is needed to concretely substantiate my hypothesis. When the unit of study for the students was first planned, religion and especially caste were not foci that I thought would factor in largely in the student's lives and therefore, the unit did not successfully address questions that arose regarding both religion and caste for the students and they expressed in their reflections, great interest in learning more about both topics. This suggests that while students know varying amounts about their religion and caste, what they know and how they understand both ideologies is difficult to understand and further study could shed light on these questions as well as provide answers as to why students take such pride in their caste outside of India.

Lastly, as suggested by Chow (2001) more research is needed into understanding the benefits of maintaining your heritage language on your identity. While there is research that shows the negative link between losing your ethnic identification and factors such as academic success, there is a lack of research in the positive effects of being successfully bicultural and/or bilingual.

## **5.5. Final Comments**

In this thesis, I sought to understand what perceptions Indo-Canadian teenagers held about themselves and how they identified themselves in a country where they are visible minorities and the impact that it has on their everyday lives. What I encountered was a group of students who were confident and successfully negotiating the complexities of being a teenager, being bicultural and defining themselves in ways that had never occurred to me, as a researcher, a teacher or as a member of the same community as the study participants. As I proceeded through with the research, I learned more about the students that I had already taught for a year and a half and was surprised at what I found. I had not expected the students to be such active agents in preserving their Punjabi culture and heritage, using their family and friends as support and motivators to maintain their values and morals.

The participants in this study caused me to pause and reflect on my own upbringing and, through their explanations of why they believe what they do, I understand better how I became the woman that I am, and revealing to me the answers to questions I have had since I was their age about being bicultural and the importance of family and friends in sustaining that bicultural identity.

## References

- Ames, M.M. & Inglis, J. (1973). Conflict and change in British Columbia Sikh family life. *BC Studies* 20, 15–49.
- Berreman, G. D. (1960). Caste in India and the United States. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 66(2), 120-127.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education (1996). *Punjabi 5 to 12 Integrated Resource Package 1995*. Victoria, BC: Curriculum Branch.
- Chow, H. P. H. (2001). The challenge of diversity: Ethnic identity maintenance and heritage language retention in the Canadian mosaic. Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage.
- Chumak-Horbatsch, R. (1999). Language change in the Ukrainian home: From transmission to maintenance to the beginnings of loss. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 31(2), 61–75.
- Dosanjh, J.S. (1997). Asian Parents and English Education – 20 Years On: A Study of Two Generations. *Children & Society*, 12(1), 25-37.
- Dosanjh, J.S. & Ghuman, P.A.S. (1998). Child-rearing Practices of Two Generations of Punjabis: Development of Personality and Independence. *Educational Studies* (03055698), 23(3), 459.
- Duff, P.A. (2007). Multilingual in Canadian schools: Myths, realities, and possibilities. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 149-163
- Duff, P. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum/Taylor & Francis. (248 pages) Chapter 1.
- Duff, P. (2008). Heritage language education in Canada. In D. Brinton, O. Kagan, & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 71–90). New York: Routledge.
- Duff, P. & Li, D. (2009). Indigenous, minority, and heritage language education in Canada: Policies, contexts, and issues. *The Canadian Modern Language Review / La revue canadienne des langues vivantes* 66(1), 1-8.
- Fisher, M.P. (1997). *Living Religions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Giampapa, F. (2001). Hyphenated identities: Italian-Canadian youth and the negotiation of ethnic identities in Toronto. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5(3), 279-315.

- Guardado, M. (2009). Speaking Spanish like a boy scout: Language socialization, resistance, and reproduction in a heritage language scout troop. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 66(1), 101-129.
- Hall, S. (1996). *Modernity: An Introduction to modern societies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Judge, P. S. (2003). Social construction of identity in a multicultural state: Sikhs in Canada. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(17), 1725-1731.
- Kalsi, P.S. (2003). "The Best of Both Worlds": Bicultural identity formation of Punjabi women living in Canada. *Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education – Online Proceedings*.
- Li, G. (2006) Bilingual and trilingual practices in the home context: case studies of Chinese-Canadian children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 6(3), 355-381.
- Mahmood, C. K. (1989). Sikh rebellion and the Hindu concept of order. *Asian Survey*, 29(3), 326-340.
- Marshall, E. & Toohey, K. (2010). Representing family: Community funds of knowledge, bilingualism, and multimodality. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(2), 221-242.
- McIntosh, P. White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *Peace and Freedom*. pp. 10-12.
- Mills, J. (2001). Being Bilingual: Perspectives of Third Generation Asian Children on Language, Culture and Identity. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 4(6), 383-402.
- Norton, B. (2005). Towards a model of critical language teacher education. *Language Issues*, 17(1), 12-17.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Park S, & Sarkar, M. A parents' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children and their efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language: a case study of Korean-Canadian immigrants. (2007) *Language, Culture & Curriculum*. 20(3): 223-235.
- Pavlenko, A., & Norton, B. (2007). Imagined communities, identity, and English language learning. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 669-680). New York: Springer.

- Rangaswamy, P. (2005). South Asian Diaspora. In M. Ember, C.R. Ember & I. Skoggard (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*. (pp. 285-294). New York: Springer.
- Schwandt, T. A., Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, (114), 11-25.
- Smythe, S. & Toohey, K. (2009). Investigating sociohistorical contexts and practices through a community scan: A Canadian Punjabi Sikh example. *Language and Education* 21 (1), 37-57.
- Sodhi, P., Gamlin, P., Maracle, D.T., Eamer, A., Komorowsky, L., & Yee, G. (2001). Living authentically in multiple cultures: Responding to diversity is everyone's business. In P. Gamlin, M. Luther, and G. Wagner (Eds.), *Exploring human potential: Facilitating growth in the new millennium*, pp.94-141. Toronto: Captus University Press.
- Sodhi Kalsi, P. (2003). Ethnic Identity: Examining the impact of the home and school environments on second-generation Sikhs in Canada. *Sikh Review* 51:1 (589), pp.41-46.
- Somerville, K. (2008). Transnational belonging among second generation youth: Identity in a globalized world. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 23–33.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). Participant observation. Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart, Winston.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Statistics Canada. (2006). *2006 Census: Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population*. (Report No:97-557-XWE2006001). Retrieved December 4, 2009 from <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/indexeng.cfmCFID=3602473&CFTOKEN=55132540>
- Tatum, B.D. (1997). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race*. New York: Basic Books.
- Toohey, K. (1998). "Breaking them up, taking them away": ESL students in Grade 1. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(1), 61 - 84.
- Toohey, K., Waterstone, B., & Jule-Lemke, A. (2000). Community of learners, carnival, and participation in a Punjabi Sikh classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 56(3), 421.
- Xiao, H. (1998). Chinese language maintenance in Winnipeg. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 30(1), 86–96.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Appendices

### Appendix A



The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services  
**Behavioural Research Ethics Board**  
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

### CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</b> Margaret M. Early	<b>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</b> UBC/Education/Language and Literacy Education	<b>UBC BREB NUMBER:</b> H10-00005
<b>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:</b>		
Institution	Site	
N/A	N/A	
Other locations where the research will be conducted: Burnaby South Secondary School		
<b>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</b>  N/A		
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES:</b> N/A		
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian Heritage		
<b>REB MEETING DATE:</b> January 28, 2010	<b>CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:</b> January 28, 2011	
<b>DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:</b>		<b>DATE APPROVED:</b> March 23, 2010
Document Name	Version	Date
<b>Consent Forms:</b>		
Identity Project Publication Consent Form	1.0	January 10, 2010
Identity Project Consent Form	2.0	February 5, 2010
<b>Assent Forms:</b>		
Identity Project Assent Form	2.0	February 5, 2010
<b>Letter of Initial Contact:</b>		
Identity Project Initial Contact	2.0	February 5, 2010
The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
<p>Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair Dr. Ken Craig, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair</p>		

## Appendix B



March 17, 2010

Priya Benning

Dear Priya,

Re: The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian heritage

Your proposal to conduct this action research project with your Punjabi 11 class has been approved. You will be working under the supervision of Dr. Margaret Early, University of British Columbia.

As you know, district permission does not compel students to participate, as involvement in research is always done on a voluntary basis. Upon completion, please send me a summary of your results.

I wish you the best with your study and if I can be of assistance, do not hesitate to contact me

Sincerely,

Susan van Gorp, Ph.D.  
District Research Contact

C: Gordon Li, Principal of Burnaby South Secondary School  
Dave Eberwein, Director of Instruction

5325 Kincaid Street  
Burnaby, British Columbia  
Canada V5G 1W2  
(604) 664-8441  
FAX (604) 664-8382

## Appendix C

Department of Language & Literacy Education

2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604) 822-5788

Tel: (604) 822-3154

### **Student Consent Form** **The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian Heritage**

A Research Project Contributing to a Graduate Thesis (Master of Arts)

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Margaret Early  
Associate Professor  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 822-5231  
Email: [margaret.early@ubc.ca](mailto:margaret.early@ubc.ca)

**Co-Investigator:** Priya Binning  
UBC Graduate Student (Master of Arts)  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 664-8560 ext 2142  
Email: [priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca)

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Canadian high school students of South Asian heritage define their identities and explore if and how learning Punjabi language and culture as a curriculum subject has affected their perceptions of who they are. The students will complete several activities, participate in classroom discussions and create a multi-modal representation of their understandings of what their identities are.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in the research, the work that you produce and the ideas that you share in classroom discussions will be used as part of the study. The lessons and the activities featured in this research study are part of the teacher's regular curriculum for Punjabi 11. Your classroom activities, discussions, and project presentations will be photographed and recorded (video or audio) only with your permission. Your participation or non-participation in the research will not affect how the classes are taught.

At the end of the unit, you will be asked to reflect on the ideas and work that you have produced in the class, both in focus-group classroom discussions and in writing. The discussions will be audio taped. You can review the videotapes, and audio recordings, at any time.

Your class work will also be collected. This may include copies or recordings of artwork

(whether it's a poster, video or another mode), academic writing, or materials that you create using a computer.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential, during and after the study. Only the principal investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the data collected in this study. You and your school will not be named in any reports or publications of the completed research. All data, including information about your identity, will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. Digital data will be stored in a password-protected computer file.

**Sometimes a student may be very proud of her/his work and want to have his/her name included. For example, you may create a poster or video that is very special to you. If you want your name to be included with your work, we will send another note to you. We will not include your name without first getting your permission.**

**Duration:**

The study will take approximately six weeks, the duration of the Identity unit. The teacher will record field notes of regular classroom activities at weekly intervals. Classroom activities will be videotaped two or three times during the unit. Each videotaping of the class will last no longer than 60 minutes. Individual presentations and performances, each lasting no longer than 10 minutes, will also be videotaped. The camera will be arranged so that it does not interfere with the lesson.

**Refusals:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse or withdraw permission at any time to participate. If you do not wish to be photographed, or recorded (video or audio), we will ensure that you do not appear in the reporting of the data.

We are aware that you may feel pressure to agree to participate because the co-investigator is also your teacher. However, we assure you that there is no pressure of any kind for you to agree to participate.

If you do not participate in this research study, you will not suffer any consequences or penalty of any kind in your achievement or assessment in the activities of the class, or in your class standing in the course. Because the Identity project is part of the teacher's regular Punjabi 11 curriculum, your non-participation in the research study will not result in being excluded from any of the assigned activities and learning opportunities.

To ensure that participation is voluntary, the principal investigator, Dr. Margaret Early, will collect and hold on to all consent forms until the end of the project, after grades have already been assigned; only Dr. Margaret Early will know who has chosen to participate. **For the entire duration of the project, your teacher will NOT know which students have consented to participate.**

**Dissemination of Research:**

The data collected in this study will contribute to a graduating thesis for a Master of Arts degree. The findings may be shared at national and international conferences and published in professional and research journals. Reports based on these presentations and articles will be available to all participants.

**Inquiries:**

We will be happy to answer any questions about the research at any time. Please feel free to contact us either in person, by email, or by telephone.

**Concerns:**

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or e-mail to [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

If you have any questions about the study, contact the principal investigator, **Dr. Margaret Early** at (604) 822-5231 or at [margaret.early@ubc.ca](mailto:margaret.early@ubc.ca).

**Consent:**

Please complete the following and return it to the *principal investigator*, who will collect the forms in your Punjabi class.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above. You understand that your participation in this research is voluntary, and that you have freely and willingly consented to participate in this research project. Your signature also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. You may withdraw your consent at any time without any consequences to you.

Please check the appropriate box for each line:

**You consent to**

- participate in this research study.**
- be photographed for this study.**
- be audio recorded for this study.**
- be video recorded for this study.**

**You consent that your work for this identity project (written, visual, or some other mode)**

- may be photographed for this study.**
- may be audio recorded for this study.**
- may be video recorded for this study.**

Remember that your identity and work will remain confidential. If you wish to have your name included to identify creative authorship, you will have the opportunity to grant permission on a separate form that will be distributed later.

**OR**

- You do not consent to participate in this research study.**

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your attention to this request.

## Appendix D

Department of Language & Literacy Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604) 822-5788

Tel: (604) 822-3154

### **Parental/Guardian Consent Form** **The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian Heritage**

A Research Project Contributing to a Graduate Thesis (Master of Arts)

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Margaret Early  
Associate Professor  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 822-5231  
Email: [margaret.early@ubc.ca](mailto:margaret.early@ubc.ca)

**Co-Investigator:** Priya Binning  
UBC Graduate Student (Master of Arts)  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 664-8560 ext 2142  
Email: [priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca)

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Canadian high school students of South Asian heritage define their identities and explore if and how learning Punjabi language and culture as a curriculum subject has affected their perceptions of who they are. The students will complete several activities, participate in classroom discussions and create a multi-modal representation of their understandings of what their identities are.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the research, the work that they produce and the ideas that they share in classroom discussions will be used as part of the study. The lessons and the activities featured in this research study are part of the teacher's regular curriculum for Punjabi 11. Your child's classroom activities, discussions, and project presentations will be photographed and recorded (video or audio) only with your permission. Your child's participation or non-participation in the research will not affect how the classes are taught.

At the end of the unit, your child will be asked to reflect on the ideas and work that they have produced in the class, both in focus-group classroom discussions and in writing. The discussions will be audio taped. You can review the videotapes, and audio recordings, at any time.

Students' class work will also be collected. This may include copies or recordings of artwork (whether it's a poster, video or another mode), academic writing, or materials that your child creates using a computer.

**Confidentiality:**

Your child's identity will be kept strictly confidential, during and after the study. Only the principal investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the data collected in this study. Your child and your child's school will not be named in any reports or publications of the completed research. All data, including information about your child's identity, will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. Digital data will be stored in a password-protected computer file.

**Sometimes a student may be very proud of her/his work and want to have his/her name included. For example, perhaps your child creates a poster or video that is very special to her/him. If your child wants her/his name to be included with his/her work, we will send another note to you. We will not include your child's name without first getting your permission.**

**Duration:**

The study will take approximately six weeks, the duration of the Identity unit. The teacher will record field notes of regular classroom activities at weekly intervals. Classroom activities will be videotaped two or three times during the unit. Each videotaping of the class will last no longer than 60 minutes. Individual presentations and performances, each lasting no longer than 10 minutes, will also be videotaped. The camera will be arranged so that it does not interfere with the lesson.

**Refusals:**

Your permission to allow your child to participate in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse or withdraw permission at any time to allow your child to participate. If you do not wish your child to be photographed, or recorded (video or audio), we will ensure that he/she does not appear in the reporting of the data.

We are aware that you may feel pressure to agree to your child's participation because the co-investigator is also your child's teacher. However, we assure you that there is no pressure of any kind for you to grant your permission.

If your child does not participate in this research study, he/she will not suffer any consequences or penalty of any kind in his/her achievement or assessment in the activities of the class, or in his/her class standing in the course. Because the Identity project is part of the teacher's regular Punjabi 11 curriculum, your child's non-participation in the research study will not result in him or her being excluded from any of the assigned activities and learning opportunities.

To ensure that participation is voluntary, the principal investigator, Dr. Margaret Early, will collect and hold on to all consent forms until the end of the project, after grades have already been assigned; only Dr. Margaret Early will know who has chosen to participate.

**For the entire duration of the project, your child's teacher will NOT know which students have consented to participate.**

**Dissemination of Research:**

The data collected in this study will contribute to a graduating thesis for a Master of Arts degree. The findings may be shared at national and international conferences and published in professional and research journals. Reports based on these presentations and articles will be available to all participants.

**Inquiries:**

We will be happy to answer any questions about the research at any time. Please feel free to contact us either in person, by email, or by telephone.

**Concerns:**

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or e-mail to [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

If you have any questions about the study, contact the principal investigator, **Dr. Margaret Early** at (604) 822-5231 or at [margaret.early@ubc.ca](mailto:margaret.early@ubc.ca).

**Consent:**

Please complete the following and return it to the *principal investigator*, who will collect the forms in your child's Punjabi class.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above. You understand that your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and that you have freely and willingly consented to allow your child to participate in this research project. Your signature also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. You may withdraw your consent at any time without any consequences to your child.

Please check the appropriate box for each line:

**You consent that your child**

- may participate in this research study.**
- may be photographed for this study.**
- may be audio recorded for this study.**
- may be video recorded for this study.**

**You consent that your child's work for this identity project (written, visual, or other mode)**

- may be photographed for this study.**
- may be audio recorded for this study.**
- may be video recorded for this study.**

Remember that your child's identity and work will remain confidential. If you wish to have your child's name included to identify creative authorship, you will have the opportunity to grant permission on a separate form that will be distributed later.

**OR**

- You do not give consent for your child to participate in this research study.**

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your attention to this request.

**Appendix E**

**Department of Language & Literacy Education**  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4  
Tel: (604) 822-5788  
Tel: (604) 822-3154

**CONSENT FORM**  
**Publication of Student Work and Public Attribution of Creative Authorship**  
**The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian Heritage**

A Research Project Contributing to a Graduate Thesis (Master of Arts)

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Margaret Early  
Associate Professor  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 822-5231  
Email: [margaret.early@ubc.ca](mailto:margaret.early@ubc.ca)

**Co-Investigator:** Priya Binning  
UBC Graduate Student (Master of Arts)  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Phone: (604) 664-8560 ext 2142  
Email: [priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca)

I wish to have my name included with the publication of my school work. I have previously agreed to have my work included in the research project entitled “The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students of South Asian Heritage.” I do not wish to have my work published anonymously. By signing this consent form, I am communicating my desire to have my work attributed to me in any print, digital, or other media used to communicate the results of the research project.

Student’s Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My child wishes to have his/her name included with the publication of her/his school work. I agree with my child’s wishes. By signing this consent form, I give permission for his/her work to be attributed to her/him in any print, digital, or other media used to

communicate the results of the research project.

Parent's/Guardian's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

Department of Language & Literacy Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4  
Tel: (604) 822-5788  
Tel: (604) 822-3154

### RE: Punjabi 11

Period 1.4 | Spring 2010 | Burnaby South Secondary School

## The Multi-Identities of Canadian High School Students Of South Asian Heritage

Dear Parents & Guardians of Students in Punjabi 11,

Your child's Punjabi 11 class will soon be working on a project focusing on identity and culture. As outlined in the curriculum, students will analyse the effects that knowing about Punjabi language and culture might have on various aspects of their lives.

To support this, the class project is designed so that students are able to creatively express their identities and reflect on how learning Punjabi may have altered those identities.

The Identity project has several components:

- 1) Classroom discussions and activities designed to encourage students to think about their own identities and how their culture is shaped by those around them.
- 2) The completion of a multi-modal project meant to allow the students to express their own identities
- 3) Focus-group classroom discussions and written reflections on the unit and the process of defining one's identity.

This year researchers from the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC), one of whom is your child's teacher, plan to conduct a research project to explore how Punjabi Canadian teenagers identify themselves, and what, if any, role learning Punjabi has on their identities.

This notice is to inform you that students in the class will be invited to participate as research subjects, and to assure you that this **participation is entirely voluntary**. We are aware that you may feel pressure to agree to your child's participation because the co-investigator is also your child's teacher. However, we assure you that there is no pressure of any kind for you to grant your permission.

If your child does not participate in this research study, he/she will not suffer any

consequences or penalty of any kind in his/her achievement or assessment in the activities of the class Identity unit, or in his/her class standing in the course. Because the Identity project is part of the teacher's regular Punjabi 11 curriculum, your child's non-participation in the research study will not result in him or her being excluded from any of the assigned activities and learning opportunities.

To ensure that participation is voluntary, the principal investigator, Dr. Margaret Early, will collect and hold on to all consent forms until the end of the project, after grades have already been assigned; only Dr. Margaret Early will know who has chosen to participate. **For the entire duration of the project, your child's teacher will NOT know which students have consented to participate.**

In the next week, your child will bring you a consent form that explains the details of the research study. If you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me at Burnaby South:

Tel (604) 664-8560 ext 2142  
Email: [priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:priya.binning@sd41.bc.ca)

Thank you for your consideration,

Priya Binning  
Teacher, Punjabi 11, Burnaby South Secondary