

INDIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S POST-DIVORCE EXPERIENCE

by

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Abstract

The post-divorce experience has been the topic of much research in Western, industrialized nations. Little is known about the experiences of women from non-Western countries who have immigrated to Western countries. This study explores the post-divorce experiences of immigrant women from India who came to Canada with their husbands and subsequently got divorced. This study examines the economic, social, and residential changes these women faced after their divorces; the resources they used to cope with the changes; and the effects of their religions on their attitudes towards divorce. Qualitative data were collected via face-to-face interviews. Six women from Hindu and Sikh backgrounds, residing in the Greater Vancouver area, took part in this study. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data. As expected from previous findings, participants experienced a significant decrease in their incomes; their social networks diminished; and most left their marital residence. Most participants did not receive their share of the marital property, which is a key contrast to the experience of non-Indian women from the Western world. Contrary to previous studies that suggested South Asian women experience banishment from their families, every participant stated that she received full support from her family. The last finding concerns the influence of religion on the way these women perceived divorce. All participants emphasized individual spirituality, as well as education, to be more influential than the religious prescription of divorce in how they perceived divorce. This study is an exploratory study and it is limited by the small sample size.

Preface

This study was reviewed by the University of British Columbia's full Behavioural Research Ethics Board and was approved as Minimal Risk study on June 16, 2011. The UBC BREB Number for this study is H11-00378.

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Dedication

I wish my Ma and Baba were here to see this. I dedicate this thesis to them and the six remarkable women who took part in my study.

Introduction

This research explored the post-divorce experience among immigrant women from India, by interviewing first-generation immigrant women with a focus on women from Hindu and Sikh religious backgrounds. In order to understand their post-divorce experiences, this study looked into the changes these women faced following the divorce; how they coped with the changes; and the effect of their religious affiliation on their divorce experience.

Between the years 2001 and 2006, the second largest group of immigrants to Canada came from India. Within this immigrant group, the majority of people were admitted under the family class category (Hansen, 2004). During the period of 1996-2000 three out of every four Indian immigrants to B. C. who came under the family class category, did not speak, write or understand English (B. C. Stats, 2009).¹ The family class category includes women who follow their husbands to Canada either by immigrating to Canada with their husbands or being sponsored by their husbands who went to India to marry them. Most of the time, these women leave their natal families² behind. These women often do not foresee their future in Canada without their husbands. However, the 2001 Canadian Census revealed that in the Indian Community, out of all family types, there are 7.8% (6.2% women and 1.6% men) who are lone parents (Statistics Canada, 2001). This research focused on the women who have experienced divorce after coming to Canada.

The majority of the existing research on post-divorce experience is focused on Caucasian families in the United States. There has been some research on immigrant ethnic minority women, such as Korean and Chinese, but there seems to be a paucity of research about the post-

¹ The term used is Indian and not South Asian. South Asia consists of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Myanmar. The geography, history, politics and religion of these countries are varied, which makes the social culture quite diverse. This research is focused on women from India therefore, the term South Asian does not apply.

² For this thesis the term “natal family” refers to family that the women participants were born and raised in.

divorce experience of Indian immigrant women. It is not known to what extent Indian immigrant women's divorce experiences resemble those of Western Caucasian women's or those of women from other ethnic groups. There are several reasons as to why it can be expected that their post-divorce experience could be different from mainstream women. Being immigrants, these women may lack family and social support in Canada (Guru, 2009). Language could be another barrier these women most likely face when seeking help from social agencies (Kang, 2006). Their educational credentials from India might not be recognized here, as a result making it hard for these women to reconstruct their careers (Bauder, 2003; Dean & Wilson, 2009).

The current study included participants from varied religious backgrounds who were first generation immigrants to Canada. The focus on their religious backgrounds was because it is not known how their religions influenced their attitudes towards divorce. In previous studies, it has been found that how one defines divorce prior to facing one's own, influences one's post-divorce experience (Booth & Amato, 1991). Therefore, if a religion does not have provisions for divorce in its doctrine, the followers of that faith might have a negative attitude towards divorce and thus their post-divorce experience could be different from others who see divorce differently. The purpose of this study was to increase awareness of the factors that affect lives of divorced women who are immigrants from India. The following research questions were addressed:

Question 1: How does divorce affect Indian immigrant women's economic, social and residential situation?

Question 2: How do Indian women use their social and personal resources to adjust to the changes that follow their divorces?

Question 3: How do Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim women who are divorced view the effect of their religion on their post-divorce experience?

Current Study

Theoretical Perspective

In order to understand the post-divorce experiences of immigrant women from India, the grounded theory approach was taken to analyze the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The research on post-divorce experience is mostly limited to women from Western industrialized nations; not much is known about the experiences of women from India who come to Canada with their husbands and subsequently go through a divorce. The purpose of this study was to explore their post-divorce experiences and to gain knowledge about how they make sense out of it. Grounded theory allows the researcher to methodically analyze the data by using concepts such as coding, formulating themes, or categorizing, to explain the findings and create theories. In other words, grounded theory does not look at the data through a preexisting theoretical framework, but using the inductive method, it generates theories from the data (Silverman, 2005).

Literature Review

Although the adjustment to divorce or the consequences of divorce have been the topic of a number of studies, very little has been done in the field of cross-cultural research in divorce adjustment (Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004). Therefore, most of the literature that is discussed here is based on the studies that have been done in Western industrialized nations. The literature review is organized in the following way: the major consequences of divorce, i.e., economic, social support and change in residence, are discussed first; next follows a discussion about the religious perception of divorce and its effects; the literature review ends with a discussion of a study that compares the impact of divorce on men and women in India and the United States (Amato, 1994).

Post-divorce economic changes. Women suffer a significant decrease in income after divorce. There are several reasons for that: Most often women have the custody of children, and the alimony or child support payments are often neither sufficient nor regular; and women most often have little labour market experience. As a result they are not able to work full time and earn less than men (Amato, 1994; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Gerstel, Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Morgan, 1989; Pett & Vaughan-Cole, 1986; Shapiro, 1996; Weitzman, 1985). Yet a study done by Shapiro (1996) found that the adjustment of divorced people was related more to their subjective perception of economic hardship rather than to their actual financial situation.

According to scholars who studied the effects of marital dissolution and mental health, marriage protects men's and women's mental health differently (Gerstel et al, 1995). They state that married women have financial security, whereas married men enjoy the security of a social network that is mostly maintained by their wives. Thus dissolution of marriage throws the woman into economic stress. Pet and Vaughan-Cole (1986) refer to this as the "feminization of poverty," and state that groups affected by economic issues are the ones who rely upon public transfer payments. The financial crisis for divorced women continues even 4 to 5 years after the divorce, and findings suggest that divorced women reach the peak of their poverty during this time (Morgan, 1989).

Gadalla (2009) conducted one of the most recent research studies on the economic consequences of marital dissolution. His findings state that women experience a 30% decline in their adjusted income share of the family income in the first year of their marital dissolution. According to this study, four years after the separation, women typically only regained 80% percent of their personal pre-separation income. This is in congruence with a previous study, which found that among all older unattached women in Canada, separated and divorced women were the poorest (McDonald & Rob, 2004).

Although the main reason for women to experience economic disadvantage is marital dissolution, Gadalla (2009) discusses two other social factors that prevent women from a rapid and complete financial recovery. One is the gender-based division of the workplace, wherein women are employed in jobs that typically pay a lower wage, and the other is the earning-caring factor. Mothers who are employed have restrictions on their workplace trajectories due to the demands of childcare. As the government is curtailing more and more home support programs, the responsibilities of taking care of family members fall on women, thus thwarting any aspirations that they may have to move forward in their workplace (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2002).

The sharp decline in women's incomes just after marital dissolution seems to be universal. A study done in the Netherlands about the economic consequences of union dissolution yielded similar findings as studies done in North America (Manting & Bouman, 2006). This study found that women faced harsher economic consequences than men, and many divorced women in the Netherlands depended on social welfare. This is despite the fact that Dutch women receive childcare allowances that place them at an advantage in comparison to their counterparts in other European nations. On the other hand, childcare arrangements in the Netherlands are below the average by European standards. Thus many Dutch divorced women choose not to work. A study done in Turkey also found that financial strain was related to social and emotional adjustments, although the strain was not a clear predictor of psychological stress (Yilmaz & Fisiloglu, 2005). In addition to these, two other studies involving divorced Korean immigrant women in the USA and Indian women in the United Kingdom found that, although participants were employed, their earnings were frequently deposited in their husbands' bank accounts and they did not have any control of their own earnings (Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009; Guru, 2009). In one case, a South Asian woman who lived with extended family members prior to her divorce, had to hand over her whole salary to her mother-in-law (Guru, 2009). These findings

illustrate that the ramifications of divorce may be very different for an Asian women than the experiences of divorce for Western women in general.

Economic status is related to employment, and employment is closely related to education. Research shows that divorced women with an education, and women who are employed in their professional fields, adjust better to their lives after divorce because they have job satisfaction that offsets their negative feelings towards marriage dissolution (Wallerstein, 1986). However, in a study done in the USA involving the predictors of divorce adjustment, it was found that education is not positively related with divorce adjustment, but employment is closely related to positive post-divorce adjustment (Wang & Amato, 2000). A similar study involving Muslim Arab people in Israel was done (Cohen & Savaya, 2003) and contrary to the Wang and Amato study, the Israeli study found that, of all variables, education made the greatest contribution to explaining variance in post-divorce adjustment.

Many divorced women are forced to join the labor market without any specific skill to become wage earners. Employment for these women does not necessarily alleviate the negative feelings rising from divorce. Even though they work, they still maintain a low socio-economic status. Most of them work in isolated environments void of social interactions. Their low wages do not allow them to spend money on social recreation (Milardo, 1987). According to Statistics Canada, the general income in the Indian community is less than that of the mainstream community. Women in the Indian community earn, on an average, under \$21,000 per annum whereas the average income for women in general was \$27,000 for the same year (Statistics Canada, 2001).

A study done in Israel to explore the changes in the self-concept of divorced women found that most of them saw themselves as changed for the better (Baum, Rahav, & Sharon, 2005). Participating women in this study perceived themselves improved in aspects of self-concept, being independent, having more control over their lives, feeling more competent and

having high self-esteem. Though the purpose of this study was not to connect variables that may affect how women perceived themselves, a close look at the participating sample reveals a few interesting facts. First of all, the participants in this study were going through a post-divorce adjustment-counseling program offered by social services. 45% of the sample had post-secondary education and 49% of the participants were either professionals or held white-collar jobs. With the level of education in this sample, employment and income likely affected the way these women perceived themselves. In another study, Shapiro (1996) found that the adjustment of divorced people was related more to their subjective perception of economic hardship than to their actual financial situation.

Social support/social network. Social support is another factor that is affected when a couple goes through a divorce. Social support for women is defined in terms of the availability of people who would listen to them, console them, provide care when they are sick, help them financially or physically (i.e., performing minor fixing of things, giving rides, moving heavy objects, etc.), and make them feel that they are valued. This is mostly how Janet Chang described and measured social support among divorced Korean women (Chang, 2004). Social networks included, friends, relatives, co-workers and family.

Large social networks, as well as support groups, have been found to be positively related to post-divorce adjustment (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Booth & Amato, 1991; DeGarmo & Forgatch, 1999; Gerstel, 1988; Gerstel et al., 1985; Kramrei, Coit, Martin, Fogo, & Mahoney, 2007; Menaghan & Lieberman, 1986; Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986; Richmond & Christensen, 2001). According to a review of the literature, in 2004, there were 66 empirical studies that involved social relationships and post-divorce adjustments (Kramrei et al., 2007). This is also an area with many contradictory findings. Some scholars suggest that women are the kin keepers in a marriage and thus develop strong social networking skills (Plummer et al.,

1986). Another study suggests that, although women are the kin-keepers during marriage, their social networks seem to include only relatives; and once women get divorced they feel the intense need for an external support system (Milardo, 1987). This is in congruence with other studies that found that divorced women have fewer people to rely on and mostly rely on kin. Women who primarily rely on kin feel more secure and reassured of their self-worth (Gerstel et al 1985; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981). However, Milardo argues that kin can be supportive but they can also be critical. Milardo's arguments also reflect those of other scholars, who state that women who rely on kin are viewed as burdensome by the kin (Gerstel et al 1985). Milardo also rejects previous findings that suggest that the greater the size of a person's social network, the easier the adjustment will be. He argues that a bigger network does not necessarily mean a more helpful network, since a bigger network also increases the degree of interference.

Other scholars who studied the association between social support and adjustment to difficult stressful events, state that the social network doesn't have a direct impact on post-divorce social adjustment and that, at best, it works as a buffer between elevated stress level and physical and mental wellbeing (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Kitson, Babri, Roach, & Palcidi, 1989). Though in a more recent study which saw social support seeking as a coping strategy, it was revealed that women who acquired more social support reported having fewer physical and psychological health problems (Richmond & Christensen, 2001). Participants stated that they sought informal support from their social networks, which included friends, neighbors, co-workers and relatives. The study also says that women only sought formal support when their informal support was exhausted. Richmond's and Christensen's findings can be explained through another study that investigated the influence of divorce support groups (Oygard & Hardeng, 2001). Participants of this study were members of a mixed divorce support group and were asked which characteristics of the support group were most important to them. Women members cited that their adjustment to divorce was associated mainly with emotional support,

including listening, showing concern and conveying intimacy (Oygard & Hardeng, 2001). These are common characteristics of a friend, relative or co-worker who, according to the Richmond and Christensen study, provide informal support.

Another controversial area regarding social networks is with whom divorced people socialize. One study states that divorced individuals are hesitant to socialize with married couples because married people may think that divorced individuals pose a threat to their relationships (Gerstel, 1987). This study also states that divorced people do not like to associate with support groups for the divorced, as they find it demoralizing. This latter finding clashes with Amato's (1994) statement that the divorced individuals feel a need to seek out others in the same situation in order to provide moral support to each other. However, a recent study looked at the details of the changes in social networks after divorce (Albeck & Kaydar, 2002). This study acknowledges that a drop in social network size takes place soon after divorce, which could sometimes be reduced by as much as 40%. The drop of social support occurs mostly among people who became friends during the marital period. Women also suffered a decrease in relationships with people who were friends of their former husbands prior to their marriage. The study goes on to state that it takes 18 to 24 months after the divorce to reconstruct a social support network. An important finding of this study is the varying sources of new relationships. Women are increasingly finding their friends from the work place, studies, and shared events. Albeck and Kaydar (2002) made a connection with this change in sources of friendship with a woman's need to make friends with people who are similar to them.

To summarize, the impacts of divorce on social support/social networks include:

- The size of social network decreases soon after a marital dissolution.
- Women tend to lose the circle of friends that they had met through their husbands.

- After the divorce, it takes about 18 to 24 for months to rebuild a social network/support group.
- Social support/networks include friends, relatives, family, co-workers, fellow members of support groups, etc.
- Social network/support is positively related with post-divorce adjustment.
- Emotional support is what women look for from their social network/support.

The above discussion on social support and post-divorce adjustment is mainly based on research done of non-immigrants in Western countries. The experience of immigrant women in Western countries can be more complex. There are only a handful of studies involving immigrant women. A study done on Korean women in the USA (Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009) and another study involving South Asian women in Britain (Guru, 2009) had some commonalities. Both of the studies involved women from patriarchal Asian societies. Being immigrants, these women felt social isolation to begin with. In addition to that, sometimes their husbands had full control over with whom and how they socialized, and also had control of their earnings. In a previous study about the evolution of a self-help organization for South Asian women in the Washington, D. C. area, the author noted that some of the women who came to seek help had reported that the other women in their community shunned them, because by leaving their husbands they had broken a cultural tradition (Preisser, 1999). Two studies done in the Greater Vancouver area, involving battered women in the Indian Diaspora, discuss the alienation these women face from the community during times of marital conflict (Dosanjh, Deo, & Sidhu, 1994, Kang, 2006). Women in these studies identified a sharp decrease in support from their natal families, as divorce was seen as a shameful event.

In the Greater Vancouver area there are numerous organizations representing the varied cultural groups of India. Members within these organizations have close ties with each other,

which sometimes resemble kinship. Keeping close ties with one's ethnic community is important for immigrants, as it provides an opportunity to retain one's cultural heritage. It is also vital in the sense that it helps in making the city become home at a deeper emotional level (Brown, 2006). Some women who come to Canada with their husbands often adopt the circle of friends or the social support network of their husbands or in-laws. More often than not, the social network that these women adopt is nestled within the ethnic community. Previous research has found that women who adopt their husbands' circles of friends often face rejection by the same people at the time of marital dissolution (Albeck & Kayder, 2002). This happens because the friends feel a sense of loyalty to the husband. For immigrant women, this can mean a void in social support. Other studies involving South Asian women in Great Britain and United States suggest that divorced women are often shunned by the members of their ethnic community (Guru 2009, Preisser 1999).

Change of residence. Another major post-divorce stressor is the change of residence. Research shows that when it comes to material wellbeing, divorced women lag behind those who are married. A study comparing the housing stability of married, divorced and widowed women showed that uneducated divorced women were the least likely to own a home and they changed residence most frequently (Amato & Partridge, 1987). The instability of residence can affect their social support, thus affecting their post-divorce experience.

Change in residence following divorce is particularly significant for immigrant women from India, since in the Indian community, sometimes members of an extended family share one residence. It is very common for a son to get married and live with his parents. Though it is common for an adult earning son to contribute to the mortgage payment, the house is usually owned by the patriarch of the family. According to the 2001 census, 24% of seniors of East

Indian origin lived with their sons or daughter whereas only 5% of all seniors in Canada lived with families (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Perception and definition. Marital quality, as well as post-divorce adjustment, is affected by people's attitudes towards divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1999; Wang & Amato, 2000). Research shows that people with conservative attitudes towards divorce were more depressed and less happy after divorce (Booth & Amato, 1991). In Indian society, divorce has a stigma attached to it, and it is linked with social disapproval (Amato, 1994). Although more recent reports state that since 2002, the family courts in the city of Mumbai have seen an increase in divorce. For every five weddings registered, it received two applications for divorce (Viju, 2008). The increase in the divorce rate has caught the attention of sociologists and psychiatrists in India. Some sociologists in India attribute the increasing rate of divorce to the pressure created by long working hours and long commutes, which make couples "time stressed" and, as a result, cracks start to show up in their relationships. On the other hand, some psychiatrists are saying that the stigma attached to divorce has lessened, and therefore divorce does not bring a family "shame" the way it used to. Now parents, instead of putting pressure on a daughter to keep the marriage intact, may support her decision to separate from her husband (Viju, 2008). However, neither the sociologists nor the psychiatrists in this report make any reference to the effect of religious belief on divorce. At the end of the literature review section, there is a summary of what marriage and divorce mean to the three major religions of the Indian Diaspora. In brief, Hinduism mentions abandonment. Sikhism does not have divorce, while only Islam has provisions for divorce.

Comparison of divorce in India and USA. Amato (1994) used the emerging literature on divorce in India to make comparisons with divorce adjustment in United States. Amato

looked into the impact of divorce on economic, social, and psychological wellbeing. Within each of these categories he examined the consequences of divorce, the predictors of divorce adjustment, and whether the divorce adjustment was likely to be more problematic for individuals in the United States or India. In addition to drawing upon the existing divorce literature by Indian scholars, Amato met with about fifty family researchers, social scholars, family court counselors, family court judges, and divorced individuals in seven Indian states. He drew upon the gender perspective to analyze his findings and discussed the adjustment process of men and women in both countries. Based on his research, Amato made three general conclusions. First, divorced individuals in both countries face a similar set of problems including economic hardship, lack of social support, psychological distress, and problems with child rearing. The second conclusion was that although the prevalence, causes and circumstances of divorce vary in the two societies, similar factors appear to facilitate divorce adjustment. People who are well educated, are employed, and have secure jobs, who have good deal of social support, and who hold non-traditional attitudes, adjust well to post-divorce life. The third conclusion was that economically, socially and psychologically, the relative cost of divorce is higher for women in both the countries. Women in India suffered more than women in the United States. However, within each of these general conclusions, Amato found differences and similarities in stressors caused by divorce, and predictors that facilitate adjustment to divorce, when he compared divorced individuals from India with the divorced individuals from United States. A discussion of these differences follows.

Amato's (1994) findings confirm what other scholars in both countries had stated, that women experience a substantial decline in their income after divorce (Choudhary, 1988; Duncan and Hoffman, 1985; Kumari, 1989; Pothen, 1986; Srinivasan, 1987; Weiss, 1984; Weitzman, 1985). However, his study found that women in India faced more economic hardship than women in the United States, due to lack of education, lack of labor market experience and lack

of financial assistance from the government. Indian women rely more on their families for financial assistance following their marital disruption than women in the United States. Amato (1994) found that the predictors of economic adjustment in both the countries were the same. They are education level, employment at the time of separation, an uninterrupted labor market experience, a small family size, young age, and a regular payment of child support by the non-custodial father (Amato & Partridge, 1987; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Weitzman, 1985). In addition to these, older age at marriage in India is positively related with economic wellbeing (Choudhary, 1988; Mehta, 1975; Pothan, 1986).

The second difference that Amato (1994) found was regarding social adjustment. Once again, marital disruption brings changes in the social network for both men and women in both countries. However, men in India seem to get more support from their families than men in the United States, and women in general. Divorced women in India face a complex situation involving their social network. Although they first receive sympathy from family and friends, eventually they find it hard to find other women who are in the same situation as they are in, since the rate of divorce in India is relatively low. As a result, divorced women in India find less mutual support than divorced women in the United States.

The third important difference that Amato discusses is the general attitude towards divorce. This plays a key role in how men and women define divorce and is also known to affect their social adjustment to life after divorce. During the 1950s and 1960s, a great number of marriages in the United States were unsuccessful. This induced the divorce laws in many states to be changed from fault-based to no-fault. Scholars have mentioned various reasons for the high number of unsuccessful marriages and among them are: the introduction of oral contraceptives, changes in real earning, the rise of feminist ideology, criticism of traditional and institutional norms, and labor force participation by women (Allen, 1998; Fuchs, 1983; Michael, 1978; White, 1990). Whatever may be the reason, the United States saw a rise in the number of

divorces; by the end of the 1980s some scholars predicted that between one-half to two-thirds of recent marriages in the United States would end in divorce (Cherlin, 1992; Kitson & Morgan, 1990; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Norton & Moorman, 1987). As divorce became more common in the United States, the stigma attached to it became less severe (Thorton, 1989). On the other hand, divorce in India remains severely stigmatized and often women are blamed for not being able to keep their marriages together. Though people in India generally accept the idea of divorce and see the need for it to be legalized, many find divorce very objectionable (Chouhan, 1986; Gore, 1968; Kurian, 1982; Singh, 1988).

According to Amato (1994) not many studies done in the United States have identified factors that facilitate social adjustment. However, employment at the time of divorce seems to facilitate the adjustment for women in both India and the United States. In addition, some scholars state that in India, urban residency, being childless, and belonging to the upper middle class also facilitate social adjustment among divorced individuals (Choudhary, 1988; Mehta, 1975). At the same time, some scholars state that dissolution of marriage has always been accepted among people of very low socio-economic status (Srinivasan, 1987).

Marriage According to the Three Major Religions in Indian Diaspora

Members of the Indian Diaspora in the Lower Mainland belong to three major religions of India. The largest population is Sikh (34%), the second largest group is Hindu (27%), and the third major group is Muslim (17%) (Statistics Canada, 2001). The number of individuals who state that they are religious is very high (96%) (Statistics Canada, 2001). Given these statistics and the cultural barriers that prevent one from abandoning an abusive husband (Kang, 2006), a brief description of what marriage and divorce mean in these three major religions is needed.

Sikh marriage. Sri Guru Nanak Dev founded the Sikh religion in the 15th century in Punjab, India. The nine successive Gurus preached the words of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and from then onwards the words were written in their holy scripture. The holy book of Sikhs is called the Guru Granth Sahib. It contains the code of conduct for Sikhs, thus Sikhs no longer need to have a person as their Guru because the Holy Scripture is regarded to be their Guru. In Sikh religion it is believed that marriage unites two souls. Marriages are monogamous. The purpose of the couple is to perform physical, as well as spiritual, duties together. It is the father's duty to find a Sikh husband for his daughter. The concept of divorce does not exist in Sikhism. Remarriage after widowhood is allowed in Sikhism (Singh, 1964). Although the concept of divorce does not exist in this religion, the Indian constitution, which is a secular one, does not prohibit divorce for any group. Sikhs are free to get a divorce in the civil court of law.

Hindu marriage. The following discussion is based on the canonical work by P. V. Kane, called the History of Dharmasashtra (1941). This series of books is still highly regarded and considered a valid interpretation of the Vedas. Vedas are the most sacred ancient literature of Hinduism, dating from 1500 to 1000 BC. Vedas consists of four collections of hymns, the collections are called the Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and the Atharva-Veda (Gombritch, 1988; Veda, 1984).

Hindu marriage was first described and prescribed in the Rig Vedas between 1500 and 1100 BC. It is considered one of the most important religious duties of parents to hold the marriage ceremony of their offspring. Marriages are arranged by the parent/guardian, and daughters are given away. However, after a certain age, a daughter has the right to choose a groom for herself if her parents/guardians fail to do so. The purpose of a marriage is to procreate as well as perform worldly and religious duties together. Inability to produce a child allows a man to remarry. Childless widows are free to conceive by getting impregnated by the deceased

husband's younger brother, male relatives or anyone the husband's family agrees upon. Remarriages of widows are allowed in Vedas. The abandonment of a husband or a wife is allowed on specific grounds. However, the marriage is never annulled. For men to abandon their wives without any reason is considered a great sin and he can become an outcast in society for this. Adultery by either the wife or husband is not deemed as a valid reason for abandonment. Adulterous husbands need to go through some heavy penance and adulterous wives need to go through a period of impurity until they go through their next menstrual cycle. If a child is conceived by an adulterous relationship or rape, the pregnancy should be carried to its full term, and after birth the child should be raised by someone else. In the case of a husband abandoning his wife, the husband has to provide maintenance for her all her life. A husband does not have any right to his wife's property. Although the marriage hymns and rituals practiced today are the same as the ones mentioned in the Vedic texts, the details of marital couples' rights and duties, as described in Veda, are hardly known. The reason that a common Hindu person does not know the Vedic texts is that Hinduism is not an organized religion. Regular teaching of Hindu scriptures is not a common practice (Pandit Sharad Chandra Shastri, personal communication, February 20, 2009). Since the Indian constitution is a secular one, the educational curriculum in the public school system does not include religious scriptures. The divorce laws are compatible with those of Western industrialized nations and Hindu women are free to get a divorce in the civil court of law.

Muslim marriage. The following description of Islamic marriage is based on the book called the Meaning of the Quran (Maududi, 1991). In Islam, marriage is seen as a religious duty, a moral safeguard and a social necessity. The parents or guardians, with the consent of the bride and groom, arrange marriages. Quran has provisions for divorce (Al-Talaq). A husband can divorce and remarry the same wife as many as three times. After the pronouncement of divorce,

a wife must stay lawful to her husband for three menstrual cycles wherein her husband has full right to reconcile with her and take her back. If a husband divorces the same wife for the third time, the wife does not have to stay lawful to her husband and the period of reconciliation ceases to exist. The only way the same couple can marry each other for the fourth time is when the wife marries another man and divorces him. It is mentioned in Quran not to divorce one's wife in haste or in anger. It prescribes some safe periods to pronounce divorce based on the monthly cycle of the wife. Muslims in India are free to get a divorce in the civil law of court.

Summary. Although the religious scriptures do not restrict any women from India from getting a divorce under the Indian constitution, the religious rhetoric in Indian culture describes home as a private heaven where women are supposed to go through self-sacrifice to maintain harmony (Kang, 2006). The temples in Indian Diaspora are not only a place for prayer, but have become an arena for the construction and maintenance of values, beliefs and customs based on the same cultural rhetoric that influences Indian women to suffer rather than divorce (Kang, 2006). Since the Sikh religion and Hindu religion do not have any provision for divorce, there would be an expectation that women in these two communities would face more stigma attached to divorce than women of Muslim religious background.

Methodology

My research is an exploratory study, because there is limited information available in the existing literature about the post-divorce experiences of immigrant women from India. I decided that for my research a qualitative method would be most appropriate. There are two reasons for this: first, it allows me to explore the experiences of individuals and find out details of their feelings and understanding of an event. Secondly, it works with a relatively small sample.

In order to keep my research aligned with previous research, I critically looked at existing studies by Amato (1994), Guru (2009), and Wang and Amato (2000) prior to formulating my research questions. These three studies looked into the impact of divorce and predictors of post-divorce adjustment by focusing on post-divorce economic changes, social changes, and psychological changes. They looked into how different resources were used to cope with the changes and also discussed the effects of perception of divorce in post-divorce adjustment. In order to formulate my interview questions (Appendix A), I drew upon the existing literature and tried to create questions that would illuminate the particularities of Indian immigrant women's divorce experiences. My study looked into their experiences and focused on how they felt about the changes (economic, social, residential) that came after their divorces; how they mobilized their personal and social resources to cope with those changes, and what they felt about it; and lastly how they made sense of their divorce experiences through their religious beliefs.

Sample criteria. The criteria for my study were the following: Participants must be residents of the Greater Vancouver area. They must be first generation immigrants from India. The women had to have been married to an Indian, and had to have come to Canada after their marriage. I wanted to mainly focus on women from Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim backgrounds; however, the women who participated in my study were Hindus and Sikhs. The lack of Muslim participants is discussed in the conclusion as one of the limitations of this study. Previous research has shown that elapsed time since divorce changes the struggles of adjustment (Kincaid & Caldwell, 1995). In reviewing the literature, I identified that a 10-year cut-off period had been used in a recent study involving Korean immigrant women (Chang, 2004). Therefore, one of the initial criteria was for my participants to be divorced for no more than ten years. However, the abovementioned criteria made it difficult to recruit women who met all of the criteria. I was

approached by women who were of Indian origin but were born and brought up in African countries or in Canada; women who never had a legal divorce but were separated for a long time; and lastly, women who met all other criteria perfectly but did not meet the time lapsed from divorce criterion. I realized that I needed to modify one of my recruitment criteria to make my study more inclusive without losing my main focus, which was to explore the post-divorce experiences of women from India. I made a chart and listed the pros and cons of lifting a criterion that would enable me to recruit more participants yet at the same time, I will be able to retain my primary focus on women from India. I came to the conclusion that I would remove the 10-year time lapse from divorce criterion. I did that because I primarily wanted to know the experiences of Indian immigrants to Canada who had been married to Indians. India has a very distinctive culture and a complex political history. Since one of the areas I was investigating was attitude towards divorce, it was necessary for my participants and their husbands to have spent their formative years in India. I consulted my thesis supervisor and she approved the modification after seeing the mind map.

Recruitment of participants. I took various avenues to locate participants for my research. The following are the ways I tried to locate participants:

- I went on Radio India for a short interview in order to get some publicity. The Radio India program is well received and reaches Indo-Canadians from every walk of life. I announced my contact information so that respondents could contact me directly. This way the respondent's identity would not be revealed to the staff of the radio station.
- I went to Hindu and Sikh temples and talked to the priests. Upon my request the recruitment flyer and a short description of my project were displayed on their bulletin boards. I also contacted two mosques in the Lower Mainland area.

- Through my community involvement, I am in touch with several community leaders. I contacted them and explained my research. I sent them the recruiting flyer containing my contact information and a short description of my project (titled Initial Contact letter, please see Appendix D)³ and requested that they circulate it among their contacts.
- I contacted the heads of the various Indo-Canadian cultural organizations and provided them with my recruitment flyer (electronic version as well as hard copy) and request them to circulate it.
- I talked to the proprietors of some businesses such as beauty parlors and a video rental shop within Lower Mainland and left the recruitment flyers in their stores where it could be visible to their patrons.
- I also took the snowball approach and asked the participants I interviewed for referrals in case they knew someone (Weiss, 1994). I left or e-mailed them a flyer and the Initial Contact Letter and asked them to pass it to the potential respondent. I explained that the respondent would have to make the first contact with me.
- I contacted five organizations that help immigrant families and talked to them about my project.
- I had also sent letters and the recruitment flyers to my friends asking whether they knew of any potential respondents. I had explained that if they knew anyone fitting the criteria then to pass my contact information to her and to ask her to make the first contact with me.

Once the potential participants responded, I then checked to see whether they qualified to be included. I did not recruit respondents who were unable to set aside time for a face to face interview without their children; were married to a man who was not Indian; women who were

Hindi and Gurmukhi versions of the Initial Contact Letter and Consent forms were available for women who could not read or understand English.

raised in Canada, and women who were of Indian origin and immigrant but were born and raised in countries other than India; and lastly women who lived a separate life from their husbands but had never gone through a legal divorce.

Interview procedure. Upon locating a possible participant or upon being approached by a possible participant, I spoke with them over the phone. I explained my research, and how I would conduct the interviews. Women who were not fluent in English I gave the choice of talking in Hindi. I e-mailed the consent form to the participants who were computer savvy. One of the participants wanted to look at the interview questions prior to the interview, and I e-mailed them to her. After looking at the questions, she agreed to take part. The preferred place of interview was the Anthropology and Sociology Building at the University of British Columbia; however, none of the participants were able to come to this venue or any other places such as the public libraries. All the interviews were conducted in each of the participant's residences, between August 2012 and November 2012.

Once I arrived at a participant's residence, I talked about my research briefly, and explained the procedure. I asked her whether they had any questions or concerns about it. Some participants did ask me questions to clarify some issues. I also explained the consent form to them. When they agreed to participate, I gave them the \$10 gift card in appreciation of their time. I had each participant sign a consent form before starting the interview.

Two of the participants broke down in tears during the interview. I offered to take a break, but to my surprise, both of them preferred to continue. One of those two participants seemed more overwhelmed than the other; therefore, I did a follow-up phone call the next day to thank her again for participating and to see how she was doing. I also had ready a list of organizations that provide counseling services and other support services to women, but nobody

needed it (See Appendix C). One other participant was in search of a specific group (spiritual) and I provided her with that information by e-mail.

The length of the interviews varied from 40 minutes to 100 minutes. The preferred language to conduct the interviews was English. However, parts of three of the interviews were done in two other North Indian languages in which I am fluent.

A small incentive of a \$10 gift card from the Real Canadian Superstore was given to each of the participants. I came to this decision after reading the notes on methodology by Mary C. Waters in her book *Black Identities* (2001). In her notes she stated that with an incentive comes a bit of coercion for participants, a fact that cannot be denied. She justified the small amount of incentive by saying that it was not a big enough amount for people to participate against their will. With this logic in mind, I decided on the amount of \$10. I gave the incentive to the participant who agreed to meet with me for an interview but she did not qualify as she had forgotten to mention beforehand that her husband was not Indian and it was her second marriage.

Sample for this study. Sixteen women responded to take part in my study, out of which only six met all the criteria. At the time of the interview the women's ages ranged from 38 to 80. Two of them had Sikh backgrounds and four of them had Hindu backgrounds. The following section is intended to illustrate the demographic information for each individual participant; a summary of key demographics is provided in Table 1. Pseudonyms have been given to the participants. While assigning the pseudonyms I took caution in not assigning a name that could identify their sub-ethnic group (more often than not, one can identify an Indian person's sub-ethnicity by looking at their names, last names also reveal the caste). To further protect their identities I modified the types of occupation and profession these women were engaged in. I also did not identify sub-groups of their ethnicity through which they might be identified.

Participant #1: Ompreet was a teacher from Punjab who chose her own partner, and supported him financially as he was trying to establish a business. She later helped him immigrate to Canada. When she arrived at Vancouver with her child to join her husband, he was not at the airport to receive her. She completed her GED, but due to disability (depression), she is currently unemployed. She lives in a basement suite with her child. She is 41 years old and was married for 2 years.

Participant #2: Surjeet is the youngest of all six participants, whose marriage was arranged. She studied up to grade eleven in India. She currently owns and operates a small-scale house cleaning business and also runs a home day-care. She lives in her own property with her children. She is 38 years old. Surjeet was married for 6 years.

Participant #3: Bimla is from North India and she chose her own husband. She is highly educated, with a PhD in Economics obtained in Canada. She made a big career move away from her trained profession and worked as a bank teller. She is currently retired and falls within the low-income bracket. She lives in a rental property where she raised her child. Bimla is 70 years old. She was married for 14 years.

Participant #4: Manju is from South India and her marriage was arranged. She is highly educated, with a master's degree in Physics obtained in Canada. She taught physics in few post secondary education institutes as an instructor. She is currently retired and lives alone. She owns her own condominium. Manju is 79 years old. She was married for 31 years and her children were adults at the time of her divorce.

Participant #5: Queenie is from North India and had an arranged marriage to a man from outside of her sub-ethnic group. She has a master's degree in Chemistry from India. Later she upgraded her education in Canada to become a teacher. Currently retired, she lives alone and owns her condominium. Queenie had just turned 80 when this interview was taken. She was married for 13 years and her children were pre-teens at the time of her divorce.

Participant #6: Hemant is from South India and chose her own husband from a different sub-ethnic group. She has a master's degree in Political Science, obtained in United Kingdom. Currently retired, she lives alone in a rented apartment. She is 79 years old. She was married for 36 years and her children were adults at the time of her divorce.

Analysis. The later coding and analysis were based on the transcriptions of the interviews. I transcribed the interviews as I completed them from August 2011 to November 2011. For some of the interviews or part of it, I had to translate Hindi and Bengali to English while transcribing. The coding and analysis were done from November 2011 to February 2012. I did two steps of coding and on the third step I started to categorize common themes and connected them with existing theories. I also grouped new themes and tried to theorize them in the concluding chapter.

Table 1. Demographic Details of Study Participants

Name	Ompreet	Surjeet	Bimla	Manju	Queenie	Hemant
Indian heritage	Punjab	Punjab	North India	South India	North India	South India
Religion	Sikh	Sikh	Hindu	Hindu	No Religion	Hindu
Current Age	41 years	38 years	70 years	79 years	80 years	79 years
Educational Qualification	B.Ed (India)	Grade 11 (India)	Ph.D. Economics (Canada)	M.Sc. Physics (Canada)	M.Sc. Chemistry (India) Grad Diploma (Canada)	M.A. Political Science (UK)
Pre-divorce Employment	Teacher (India)	Farm Worker	Research Scholar (Canada)	Physics Instructor (Canada)	Teacher (Canada)	Career Civil Servant
Marriage Type	Own Choice	Arranged	Own Choice	Arranged	Arranged	Own Choice
Length of Marriage	2 years	6 years	14 years	31 years	13 years	36 years
Years since Divorce	9 years	4 years	28 years	19 years	36 years	19 years
Post-divorce Education	GED		Diploma			
Post-divorce Employment	Unemployed due to disability	House cleaning business, Home daycare	Bank worker (retired)	Instructor (retired)	Teacher (retired)	Career Civil Servant (retired)
Children at Time of Divorce	Raising 1	Raising 2	Raised 1, now adult	Already adults	Raised 2, now adults	Already adults
Current Living Conditions	In rented basement suite with child	In own property with children	Alone in rented apartment	Alone in own condo	Alone in own condo	Alone in rented apartment
Location of Natal Family at Time of Divorce	In Vancouver area	In Vancouver area	In India	In India	In India	1 sibling in Vancouver, no one in India

Research Findings and Discussion

I have addressed and discussed my research findings in three major sections according to my research questions. First, I will describe the post-divorce changes; next, I will describe the resources my participants used to cope with the changes; lastly, I will describe how their religion affected their attitude towards divorce. Within each of these sections, I will be presenting the findings for each of my participants; then I will describe the common themes and unique themes across the findings; and finally I will discuss the findings and connect them to the existing literature and culture.

Post-divorce Changes

While interviewing my respondents, I focused on three major changes in their post-divorce life. They were i) economic changes, ii) changes in social network, and iii) residence changes. I concluded this section of the interview by asking my participants a summarizing question about the overall changes in their post-divorce lives.

Economic changes. Four out of six of the respondents I interviewed stated that they experienced economic changes after divorce. Their accounts about the kind of economic changes they faced varied from one person to the other. Two of the respondents talked about their economic hardship more than the other two. The 41-year-old Ompreet, who was working as a teacher in India, found out that her husband was living with another woman the day she landed in Vancouver to join him. She described her economic change and hardship by saying, “When I came here, my life changed completely—for a while I had to go on welfare—on income assistance program—very limited income—then I am on disability that too is limited income.” Ompreet’s life changed drastically after coming to Canada. From being a professional and living independently, she now has to survive on government dole. Her mental health has suffered and

she seems to have fallen into a vicious cycle. She mourns the loss of her career and independent life in India, which could be contributing factors to her depression. Since she is depressed, she depends on medications that make her functional so that she is able to take care of herself and her household. Because of her depression she is not able to work, which makes her more depressed. While talking to her, she never mentioned a future for herself, or a vision for her plans in the future. Ompreet was 32 years old at the time of her divorce.

The youngest respondent in the group, 38 years old Surjeet, describes the first two or three years after her marital break up as being financially “very bad.” She was pregnant with her second child and wasn’t working when her husband left her.

I wanted to go on welfare but could not go because I own this house. I did not have a job, but for welfare I need to have nothing—no money in bank, no car. I was 8 months pregnant when we separated, right? At that time I did not work. One month after the birth of my child I applied for maternity, then I started to receive \$1200, then I started to pay for the house, but before that I had to use my Visa card etc. For mortgage payments, groceries I used the Visa card for two three months, so when I started to get maternity money I started paying. After that for one year my husband did pay the child support.

She was 35 years old when she finally got divorced.

Both Surjeet and Ompreet were supposed to receive child support money from their ex-husbands according to their divorce settlements. Both of these women, who have been divorced for the last three and nine years respectively, have sole custody of their children and their ex-husbands have visitation rights. While Ompreet’s husband doesn’t keep in touch with his child, he does pay child support regularly. Surjeet’s husband visits his children very diligently, but stopped paying child support after one year because he is unemployed. According to Surjeet, his unemployment is a façade to avoid paying child support. She stated that he works for cash and thus doesn’t have to pay income tax and, as a result, he eludes paying the court-ordered child support for his two children. In addition to her regular household expenses, Surjeet is still paying off her legal fees, and does not see an end to the payments in the near future.

Ompreet's and Surjeet's accounts of economic changes and financial hardships differ from the other four respondents, probably because the other four women are highly educated and were employed at the time of their divorces. However, each of these four women had different accounts of their post-divorce economic changes.

Bimla was 42 years old at the time of her marital break up, and was working as a Research Scholar in a renowned university. She received sole custody of her child and her husband had visitation rights. Bimla had to struggle to get regular child support payments from her husband, who was earning about \$60,000 annually in 1980. She stated, "It was hard—it was hard—because I had to run the family monthly business on my single earning, could not save anything, so it was cheque to cheque." Bimla followed this objective statement with a subjective account:

It was not financial but it was my mental state that needed a lot of working —now that I am alone and how am I going to support myself and my child—considering the child's health, considering my health, considering my finance, considering the child's needs, so it was only me who is responsible for thinking and that was hard for me because I grew up in a very secure family back home.

Bimla dealt with life's affairs and stress through self-reflection, which was very evident in her interview. During the subsequent years after she separated from her husband, she made a landmark decision and changed her profession from being a Research Scholar to working a 9-to-5 bank teller job earning low wages. This will be discussed in detail in the Resources part of this section.

Bimla's subjective account of her financial change is in stark contrast to Manju's and Queenie's responses. Manju was 61 years old when she got divorced. The state of her marital life had reached a point where she and her husband were living two separate lives without communicating with one another. They had made the financial arrangements in a way where their personal income and expenses were kept separate. Therefore when asked about the

economic changes, she stated, “I was living on a budget when I was married and I was earning too, so I will say that my personal lifestyle did not change, it remained the same.”

Queenie got out of a 13-year-long marriage to a man who did not have regular earnings or support his family. She was 44 years old when her divorce was finalized. In early 1970s British Columbia, Queenie had to go through quite a few hurdles to establish herself as a teacher. When asked about the economic changes after divorce, here is what she had to say:

It did not change at all—what I did was I waited to get a full time job and my kids were little...so I wanted them to be at age when they would know that I am not doing anything wrong—so I found a job, I found a house...and then kicked him out.

Queenie’s husband was ordered by the court to pay child support, but he too did not pay, as he traveled out of the country and kept his whereabouts unknown to her. Her words were, “What supporting? He was stealing my money—never worked—he never worked...I was doing all the work...he had no choice to get the kids—he tried but it did not work.”

Hemant also left a long unhappy marriage by her own choice. As a civil servant, she had a secure job and earned reasonably well. At the time of her marital breakup she was 60 years old; her children were all adults and financially independent. Though she did not experience any immediate financial hardship soon after her marital breakup, she was affected by a long-term economic loss. Here is her account:

I had no asset other than what I saved--because I did not get anything from him because of the fact that I did not want to go get a lawyer and sue him and all that I did not want to do that because I thought it would be harmful to my child, they were in business together...but its partly my fault now I think--I should have pressed a little more and tried to get more asset which I did not--I said I got good job I got a good pension I am not going to bother.

Hemant's pension is adequate for her to live a comfortable life, but she never recovered from the loss of her assets (this will be discussed in more detail later under the Change of residence section), and as a result she was not able to purchase a property after the divorce.

There are several themes that emerge regarding the economic changes. First, women who were not employed at the time of their separation faced economic hardship the most. Secondly, women who were unemployed were the ones who had little to no education or were foreign trained professionals whose credentials were not recognized in Canada. These are the women who became dependent on social welfare. Third, only 1 out of 4 women who had young children at the time of the divorce received the court ordered child support without any hassle. Two of the fathers never paid child support, and one of the fathers paid it reluctantly and irregularly. One of the respondents, Hemant, also commented on having lost her pension fund. While not all women suffered from all of these factors, in general the post-divorce changes in their economic state did bring their overall standard of living down. I say this by considering what could have been their possible lifetime trajectory if they had successful marriages. When they left India, they had a plan to create a better future with their husbands. By getting a divorce, those plans never materialized. Lastly, I find that women who were highly educated took the decision to divorce at a later age than women who were not educated or less educated. The four educated women were 42 years old or above at the time of their divorces, whereas the other two participants were in their early 30s.

The above-mentioned findings reaffirm the previous findings as discussed in the literature review. Most of the respondents experienced economic loss. Previous research has found a few factors that cause the decrease in women's income after the divorce. They are: having custody of young children, not receiving regular child support payments, and having little or no labour market experience (Amato, 1994; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Gerstel, Riessman, &

Rosenfield, 1985; Morgan, 1989; Pett & Vaughan-Cole, 1986; Shapiro, 1996; Weitzman, 1985). These seem to apply very well with my sample. Bimla, Queenie, Ompreet and Surjeet's children were young at the time of their divorces; all of them received full custody of their children, but only one of them received child support regularly. Ompreet and Surjeet had little labour market experience and were not employed at the time of their marital breakdown. They eventually became dependant on government assistance.

In a recent Canadian study (Gadalla, 2009) it was found that 24% of the women who got divorced or separated between the years of 1999-2004 entered low income. This seems to apply to Ompreet who continues to live on government assistance ten years after her divorce. At the age of 70 and 29 years after her divorce, Bimla survives only on her old age pension. Bimla's case matches up closely with another Canadian study, which looked into the effects of divorce and income as related to women in their old age (McDonald & Rob, 2004). According to this study, elderly divorced and separated women were the poorest among all other elderly unattached women. Bimla's and Ompreet's financial status can be explained through what Pett and Vaughan-Cole (1986) refer to as the "feminization of poverty." According to this theory, most often women become the sole custodial parent and are left with the full responsibility of attending to the children's various needs. Women who enter the labour market after their divorce with very little or no experience typically are employed in service-oriented low-paying jobs. Bimla was left with a child who had a medical condition, and though Bimla was employed in a high level profession, she took the decision to change her line of work to make time to take care of her child's physical and psychological issues. As a result, she chose a low-paying job that is overwhelmingly dominated by women. Similarly, Ompreet was left with full custody of her child, who has seen her father only for three days in her 14 years of life. Ompreet had no labour

market experience in Canada, which, along with other issues, caused her to enter the welfare system.

As was found in previous research, women who were educated and employed faced fewer economic changes (Wang & Amato, 2000), which is the case with my respondents. Bimla, Manju, Hemant and Queenie were highly educated and were employed at the time of their marital breakdowns. However, the fact that the four educated women in my study were at least a decade older than the other two participants at the time of their divorces might have contributed to their economic stability in life.

One of the contributing factors for economic loss for these women was that the ex-husbands did not pay child support. This is not an uncommon phenomena restricted to the Indo-Canadian community. The terms “Deadbeat Dad” and “Deadbeat Parent” are used to address the large number of adults in North America who fail to pay child support. However, talking to my respondents revealed another angle of how these men are eluding the government and neither paying income tax nor paying child support. These men had an advantage in getting out of the country as they had families in India. Indian society is mostly a patriarchal society. More often than not, directly or indirectly, at the time of marital dissolution, a woman is held responsible for not being able to keep her marriage intact (Amato, 1994; Guru, 2009). As a result, a divorced man gains sympathy from his family and friends, who provide him with social support (Amato, 1994). This attitude towards divorced men has made it easier for the ex-husbands of my study to travel out of the country and live with their families. It also has made it easier for them to be gainfully employed within their ethnic community in Canada, without any official record of earnings.

The findings also illustrate that though four out of six participants had seen a decrease in their income after divorce, their subjective perception did not emphasize the hardship. This

finding is in line with a previous finding by Shapiro (1996) who found that the post-divorce adjustment was related to the subjective perception of economic hardship more than the actual hardship. Almost all of my participants showed detachment from monetary matters even in the instances when they were deprived of resources that were supposed to be lawfully theirs. I use the word “detachment” because none of them initiated litigation against their husbands to obtain what they deserved as evident in Hemant’s statement above. This makes me wonder whether the philosophical attributes of Karma (deeds) and Bhagya (destiny), which are deeply rooted in Indian culture, in some way influenced their “que sera sera” attitude towards materialistic matters. Or is it the influence of the patriarchal society in which most of the participants grew up? All of my respondents had given or are giving their children’s welfare the first priority. It was evident that the children who were already grown had all received a good education and are working as professionals. They all maintain strong relationships with their mothers, whereas some of them have no connection with their fathers. This is in line with previous findings as mentioned by Amato (1994) involving divorced women in India. Only 19% of divorced women in India received alimony or child support. Within that 19%, half received it irregularly. Women in India tended to forgo child support, as they did not want to maintain contact with their ex-husbands. Except for Hemant, none of the women in my study mentioned having any type of amicable contact with their ex-husbands. Hemant was married for 36 years. Hemant sees her husband at her adult children’s houses and maintains an amicable relationship.

Change in social network. When asked about which changes in their social network occurred after their divorce, 5 out of 6 of my respondents mentioned change, but the reasoning behind the change was different for each one of them. The one who did not mention any change was Ompreet. She described her situation thus:

As it is, I do not go out that much—I think that is why I got depression... because I do not like meeting people that much...I do not trust anyone here—I think that if I share

anything with them they are going to make fun of me later—because people are different here—I do not know them.

She never had a chance to form a social circle, as on the day of her arrival to Vancouver she realized that her husband had another woman in his life. The following words capture her feelings very poignantly:

If I miss anyone that is my friends and relatives in India—even my child asks me “Ma, why do you miss India so much?” I say, you know how you have friends here, I have friends in India.

Incidentally, most members of her natal family have immigrated to Canada and her relationship with them has not changed. She resides in close proximity to her sister’s family. In addition to her siblings, Ompreet also has relatives residing within the Greater Vancouver area. All her extended family continued to keep in touch with her after the divorce and include her in family events; however, Ompreet has distanced herself from them.

I do not call them, even sometimes when they call, I do not pick up the phone because I do not feel like talking. Though nobody asks me about my husband in front of my child, none of my relatives talk about the case in front of my child because the child too suffered from depression.

Ompreet tried to keep in touch with her in-laws who live in India by calling them from time to time. She stated, “I continued calling them for quite a while because I thought, OK, they are not related to me anymore, but they are related to my child but they tried to avoid me.” Since it was obvious that Ompreet’s in-laws did not want to keep in touch with her or her child, she stopped calling them. However, she kept in touch with some of her ex-husband’s relatives in India by making phone calls every so often.

Manju’s social network did not change much because while being married and living under the same roof, she and her husband were living two separate lives without communicating with each other. To keep their marital problem private, they did not socialize like other couples do. She explained that, “It became restricted to some extent, but I was never a social person.

Partly because of my marital problem I never felt like socializing much.” When asked how she felt about her having a restricted social life, she said, “Essence lost.” Manju’s comment is not just a clichéd expression but it reflects her deep understanding about the crucial role of having a social network in life, one that she was missing. However, Manju’s relationship with both sides of her family remained intact. The reason for that is the families resided in India. Manju and her husband had a mutual divorce, and there was no formal announcement of their divorce. Manju’s divorce took place in pre-internet and pre-low cost long distance calling era. At that time, the only way immigrants from India communicated with their families was through hand-written letters that took about 12 to 15 days to arrive. This made it easy for her to keep her marital affairs private.

Bimla and Surjeet chose to change their social circles to suit their needs. Bimla had a challenging profession. She was pressed for time and decided to curtail her social life in order to spend more time raising her child. She had couple of friends who provided her with physical help for various tasks. She explained:

I removed myself from the society a lot because I could not manage to keep the social relationship which is suppose to be give and take, like you go somewhere and they come to your place, but I could not do that very much because I was more concerned about, like, how I am going to take care of myself and my child without losing my mind—it was hard.

At the same time, Bimla wanted her child to have a good sense of her ethnic identity and tried to take her child to social festivities organized by her ethnic cultural organization. When Bimla gradually found herself more stable, she started to interact with the friends in her ethnic community and they accepted her back with open arms.

Bimla’s relationship with her natal family did not change at all. Bimla stated that they fully supported her in her decision to leave her husband. Bimla’s in-laws did not denigrate her for leaving their son. They wanted their son to reconcile. One of Bimla’s sisters-in-law requested

to keep in contact with Bimla. However, Bimla chose not to continue any contact with her because she was afraid of the repercussion it might have as Bimla states that her husband was “vindictive” man. Years later, when her ex-husband wanted to take their child to a trip to India and visit his family, Bimla did not object.

The youngest respondent in the group, Surjeet, also had to change the way she socialized. According to her there were two reasons for that. First, she did not want people in her ethnic community to pity her; and secondly, she wanted her children to see other children who also belonged to single parent households. Therefore, Surjeet purposely sought single mothers to have as her friends, and her friend circle has women from various cultures. She explained:

I do mix with single friends more—one reason for me to change was for my children because it was easier for me to explain—like I have my brother and nephew—since two years back my eldest child started to ask that how come their Daddy comes home everyday but my daddy doesn’t.

Just like Ompreet, Surjeet’s side of the family and some of her ex-husband’s relatives also reside in the Greater Vancouver area. Surjeet lives within walking distance of her parent’s house. Her relationship with her natal family did not change, but she is not in touch with her in-laws. Her ex-husband’s relatives are cordial to her if they happen to meet her in public places, but they do not visit each other. Surjeet herself avoids her relatives. She stated, “They do not say anything on face, but I am sure when I am not there they talk about me on my back—but I do not care much about that.”

Queenie and Hemant had married outside their respective communities, and their friends were mostly the friends of their husbands. Both of their friend circles diminished as soon as they separated from their husbands. While Hemant still remained puzzled about that, Queenie, who was quite young at the time of her separation, had this to say:

That is the main part—we had a lot of Indian friends...we did have a group of about ten families who got together in the weekends...the moment I kicked him out it was like,

“Oh now she is going to come get our husbands.” So I thought if they feel like this—I said, “Go to hell.” I really do not need you guys, so all disconnected—so I made friends at school.

Queenie did not have any member of her natal family in Canada, however, just like Bimla’s family, they too supported her decision to break up her marriage, and her relationship with her family remained the same. Upon hearing of their marital break up, Queenie’s brother-in-law came from India and pleaded with her to take his brother back. He also offered to take the children with him to India as he thought Queenie would have a hard time raising them alone. Queenie did not agree to either of his propositions and he left. Afterwards Queenie severed all connections with her husband’s siblings. A few years after her divorce, she was contacted by one of her husband’s cousins from the USA who ran a successful business. Apparently her husband had gone there and was seeking employment at the business. Before providing him with a job, they wanted to check with Queenie to see whether he supported her financially. Upon hearing the truth, they declined his request. This illustrates the high regard this family had for Queenie, and that they wanted her ex-husband to do his duty and provide for his own family.

Hemant’s relationship with both sides of the family remained the same. Her younger siblings were very supportive of her decision. Her elder brother, who lived in Vancouver, was the only one who had some reservations about her decision to divorce. Though he did not approve of her divorce and though she avoided visiting him, he remained in the picture. On the other hand, Hemant was the only one of my participants who had good relations with her husband’s side of the family; she was even welcomed to stay with them during one of her trips back to India after her divorce. There was no mention of divorce while she was with them.

There are three commonalities that emerge from the experiences of my six participants. None of their relationships changed with their natal families. Most of the Hindu and educated women’s in-laws wanted to have a relationship with them post-divorce. Two of my Hindu participants’ in-laws suggested reconciliation. Other than the two women who were married to

someone from a different ethnic sub-group from their own, none of them experienced shunning by their friends. The third commonality that I find is that in some way or another, most of these women distanced themselves from their ethnic friends and from their in-laws, based on the assumption that they would be the targets of gossip.

The findings listed above contradict and support previous academic research. In this current study all six participants said that their relationships with their natal family did not change when they got divorced, and that they received their families' support and approval. Even some of the in-laws remained in touch or wanted to be in touch with them. This is different from previous findings in a study done in England, where the women's own family alienated them because divorce was seen to have brought shame to the family (Guru, 2009). Apart from two of the participants, none lost their friends in their ethnic communities. This too is different from what past studies involving South Asian women in Washington. D. C. area had found (Preisser, 1999). In Preisser's study women who left their abusive husbands often faced shunning from other women from their ethnic communities. In my study, Queenie, one of the two women in my study who saw her friend circle diminish when she left her husband, expressed that her friends saw her as a threat to their marriages. This phenomenon is not only restricted to the community being studied but has been supported by previous scholarly research (Kitson, 1992). The other participant who lost her Indian social circle had met the network through her husband. This too has been documented in previous research involving women in Western countries. Albeck and Kaydar (2002) stated that women who made friends with people who were their husbands' friends seem to lose their friend circle at the time of their marital breakup. The third and most important commonality that I found was that, in some way or another, most of these women distanced themselves from their ethnic friends and from their in-laws based on the assumption that they would become targets of gossip. This makes me speculate what made them have this assumption. As discussed in the literature review, in India divorce has a stigma attached to it;

more often than not, divorced women are shunned by their families and friends. Were the participants of my study shunning themselves in fear of being shunned by others? Did that give them some kind of empowerment?

Change of residence. Four out of six of my participants had to move at least once since they separated. In talking to my participants, I found that not only did they have to go through a simple change of residence, but also some of them were denied their share of ownership of the marital property.

Ompreet used to own a condominium in India, which she had purchased with money her parents had given her and with her own earnings before she got married. Her husband convinced her to sell the property and give the money to him for his voyage to Canada. Ompreet states that her husband's family used to own a family farm and a family house in the interior of Punjab and would have been financially capable of providing him with the voyage money, but he did not ask them. Upon her marital dissolution, Ompreet's husband did not return her money. Since she had given the proceeds from the sale of her flat in India on good faith, and since her divorce proceedings took place in Canada, it was very difficult for her to prove her case. At present Ompreet lives in a basement suite close to her sibling's house. When I asked her about how she felt about her residential arrangement, she said, "It is very hard—I sometimes wonder, will I ever own my own place? It is very hard to accept."

Hemant and her husband lived in a different province of Canada, and a couple of years before her marital breakup, they decided to move to Vancouver as two of their adult children already lived here. Her husband came to Vancouver first with the proceeds of the sale of their marital home and opened up his own business. He hired one of their adult children to work with him. Hemant came several months later to join him. When the marriage broke, he claimed that all the proceeds from the sale of their marital property were invested in the business, which,

according to him, was not doing well. Hemant did not pursue any litigation to claim her share, as she thought about her child who was employed in the same business. She did not want to cause any turmoil in his career. Later she regretted her decision about not pursuing to claim her share. Her own adult child told her how her ex-husband had tucked away the money in different investments and hid it from Hemant's knowledge. Hemant lives in a very modest rental apartment since her separation. This is a big change from living in and owning a comfortable detached house during her marriage. She was never able to purchase her own home after her divorce.

Queenie, who was the sole earner of her family, had financed their first marital home in a small town in the interior of British Columbia in the late 1960s. Her ex-husband had a very transient lifestyle where he would just vanish for weeks and months, even when he was married. Queenie's job as a teacher in that small town was terminated and she decided to move back to Vancouver. She was shocked to find out from her bank manager that her house had been sold. Her husband had forged her signature and he had taken all the money; nobody knew his whereabouts. Queenie was able to rebuild her life once she started working as a teacher in the Lower Mainland area. She owns and lives in a condominium in a good location.

Bimla had to move into a basement suite with her child when she left her marital home. She too never received her share of the marital home.

Surjeet owned a townhouse where she and her husband lived with their child. She had purchased it with her own money which she earned before she got married. She was the one who paid the mortgage. Surjeet's husband tried to claim a share of that townhouse. Though he did not win the lawsuit, the litigation process left Surjeet with a hefty attorney bill, and she remains in debt. Surjeet sees this as harassment and considers her husband's action as a deliberate effort to put her in a financial crisis.

The only person who received her share of the marital house was Manju. She had to move into university student housing from her sprawling, detached house when she left her marriage. Their divorce was settled very amicably, but after nine years of separation. When the marital house was sold, she received half of the money, with which she was able to purchase a comfortable place to live, where she resides now.

After hearing their stories regarding their change of residence, the following factors stand out to me. Four out of six of my participants had to move out of the marital residence at the time of their marital dissolution. One caveat is in order, though. One of my participants, Hemant's moving out of the marital home was coincidental as her marital home was in another province. She and her husband moved to British Columbia and were living in a rental property when they separated and Hemant moved out. Four out of six of my participants did not receive any money for their share of the marital home. One fought to keep her property, and only one was given her fair share⁴. The last factor that stood out was the stability of residency that they maintained. None of them mentioned having to move from place to place.

All of the findings mentioned above contradict the theories that were formulated involving women in Western countries. According to previous studies, uneducated divorced women were found to move most frequently and were least likely to own a home (Amato & Patridge, 1987; Wang & Amato, 2000). The participant who was the youngest and least educated among all the participants was Surjeet. She is the only one who fought to keep her home and who never moved from her marital residence. Ompreet survives on government assistance and lives in a rented basement suite, but she has maintained residential stability by not moving in last ten years.

⁴ In Canada each province has its own marital property law. In British Columbia, since March 31 of 1979, marital assets are equally divided between the spouses during divorce (Family Relation Act, 2012).

The biggest question that remains is, why there was only one instance among the six participants where the wife was given her fair share of marital property without a fight? The only difference that stands out between Manju's husband and the rest of the husbands is that both Manju and her husband belong to a sub-ethnic community where the matriarchal system prevails. In general, Indian society is a traditional, patriarchal society with a pluralistic approach to law regarding a woman's rights to property. The pluralistic approach allows each of the religious communities to practice their own personal law as prescribed and described in their scriptures (Panday, 2005). For instance Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are governed by one code of property rights, and Christians by another and Muslims by yet another. The Hindu Succession Act came into existence in 1956. It doesn't have any provision for a divorced woman's rights to her husband's property (Agarwal, 1998). The laws regarding a woman's rights to marital property has not been updated since then. It is only recently that the Planning Commission of India has formed a panel which is trying to bring about a comprehensive legislation, The Rights to Marital Property Act, applicable to all marriages as well as live-in partnerships (Singh, 2012). My participants and their ex-husbands grew up in India and were exposed to the laws of their own sub-groups regarding women's property rights. In a patriarchal society, it is the norm for a woman to be uprooted from her place both in marriage and in divorce (Amato, 1994). Manju's husband grew up in a matriarchal community where the matrilineal property rights prevail, and where it is the men who move in with their wives' families after their weddings. This may explain why Manju's husband gave her the share of the marital property without contest. I speculate that Manju's husband did what was considered appropriate after a divorce based on his upbringing in India.

The circumstances under which these women were deprived of their marital property rights were very closely related to their emigration and migration. Ompreet sold her place in

India to provide for the expenses of immigrating to Canada. Against the backdrop of late 1960s and being a young immigrant woman, Queenie was not in a position to challenge the bank for letting her husband sell the property alone without consulting Queenie. Her priority at that time was to take care of her children and to establish her career as a teacher. During her interview, she mentioned more than once how unaware she was about the laws and policies of the new land. Hemant and her husband moved to British Columbia from another province in Canada. Their house in their previous province was sold and her husband had invested the money to open up his new business in Vancouver.

Once again I see a pattern here, that most of my participants demonstrated what they would have been expected to do if their divorces took place in India. They never thought of standing up for their rights in the Canadian way.

Summarizing question about post-divorce changes. After asking them specifically about post-divorce economic changes, changes in social network, and change in residence, I concluded the first section (Post-divorce changes) of my interview by asking them how they described the overall changes in their lives after divorce. The number of participants in this study was not large; however, it had an interesting mix of types of marriages. Two of the participants married outside their sub-ethnic group. Three of the marriages were arranged. The other three were love marriages⁵. Four of the women left their marriage by their own choice. Based on these differences I wanted to find out how they perceived the overall changes.

Ompreet, whose marriage was a love marriage, did not want to leave her husband. She even expressed that she was willing to live in the same house where her husband lived with his

⁵ The term love marriage refers to the couples who find their own partners and fall in love then get married.

new partner. She was ready to accept that, as long as he provided a roof over her and her child's head. It doesn't seem far off when she described the changes as dreams being shattered:

Whether it is love marriage or arranged marriage, everybody has some dream, they dream about raising their children together, but when life becomes shattered, I do not know why I still get bothered so much. I think about that at night and can't fall asleep—old memories of my husband come back—he used to be caring—why did he change? If he was an alcoholic, or very quarrelsome, perhaps I would have felt differently, but I do not know why but I do not think of the bad times, I only think of the good times—perhaps that is why I get more depressed.

While Ompreet is still trying to adjust to her experience, she is still not able to tell her friends in India that she is divorced. Surjeet expressed her concerns about her marital breakup very differently, saying, “At the beginning I was very worried, what will happen? How will I face the society? How would I face all my relatives? What had happened was not difficult but I worried, how and what I would tell people?” These were Surjeet's feelings when she had just separated. When I interviewed her, she mentioned that she doesn't feel like that anymore and seems to have found a new identity. Bimla, Manju, Queenie and Hemant found the changes to be very positive. Unlike Manju and Queenie who found peace as soon as they separated, Hemant and Bimla had to internalize the change. Hemant puts it very poignantly:

I think I have come to know myself a lot better since the separation, because when something like this happens, it forces you to look inwards and it forces a kind of maturity on you, emotional maturity which you know you have to grow up very quickly and take charge and realize that you are your only resource, so that has given me a lot of strength.

After the initial adjustment, Bimla too had gone through the process of self-reflection to find herself. She said she got her strength from her upbringing.

The accounts these women presented regarding how they made sense of the changes have two discourses. Educated women used their own human agency to deal with the situation, whereas the women who were less or not educated needed professional intervention. The four

educated women came to terms with the changes by themselves, be it through post-divorce self-talk or years of contemplation while being unhappily married. The other two women, who were less educated, were more concerned about facing their communities. These women are comparatively younger than the other four. The youngest one eventually has found the strength through counseling to adjust to her new identity. Only one of the participants, Ompreet, seemed still tangled with the changes. She still continues to question why it had happened.

Apart from their difference in educational qualifications, another difference stands out. The three out of four women who were highly educated were Hindus (Queenie is excluded because she is an atheist). The other two women were of Sikh faith. Whether their religion had any effect on how they dealt with divorce will be discussed more in the Attitude towards divorce section.

Resources to cope. I looked at education, employment and social support as three main resources that might be available to help my participants cope with their post-divorce experiences. Social support could potentially incorporate tangible and emotional support from family or friends in the ethnic community and community at large, as well as workplace colleagues, and professional counselors.

Four of my six participants were highly educated women and have completed at least master's level education in England or Canada. They were all employed at the time of their marital breakup and none of them depended upon their ex-husbands for economic support.

Ompreet who had strong community and familial ties to India, returning back to India would have meant more community support. Returning to India would have also meant guaranteed employment as a teacher. She planned to go back to India with her child, which was surprisingly encouraged by her ex-husband. She said, "I wanted to go live there, go back to my

job, earn my own living, raise my child and give her the opportunity of good education.”

However, her return trip to India turned into a nightmare. Ompreet wanted to maintain a cordial relationship with her in-laws and she went to visit them. According to her, when she left their home, her in-laws brought false charges against her for theft. The charges were later dropped, but Ompreet was not sure about their motivation and her personal safety, because most of her natal family had moved to Canada by then. She too came back to Canada. Ompreet’s natal family in Canada provided her with tangible as well as emotional help, which she describes thus:

They sometime help me with money, for example my child needed braces, my sister and mother helped me. I cannot afford to buy too many gifts for my child but my sister when she buys things for her children she also buys clothes for my child, such as name brand clothing, she also gives gifts. The car you see outside is my sister’s car, I have a license but can’t afford a car, the insurance payment and all, my sister keeps this car here in case I need it for emergency or need to give ride to my child or if I feel like going somewhere.

When I asked her whether she sought any help from the Sikh community, she said that she had wanted one of the officials from the Sikh Temples that her ex-husband attended to intervene to help her get a signature from her husband in order for her child to have a passport. She did not receive any help, and eventually needed a court order for him to sign the application. The only other help that she reached out for was to get counseling. She received it outside of her ethnic community, but from an organization that specializes in working with various ethnic groups and takes a multicultural approach. This organization seemed to be extremely effective in the way they provide help. Here is what Ompreet had to say:

Actually, I would say that the most of the moral support I get is from my counselor, more than my family, because sometimes I do not feel like sharing something with my family, there are many things that I do not share with them, these days if I feel too depressed, I do share with my child but not with my mother or sister.

Ompreet and Surjeet had a similar scenario, where members of their natal family were living within the Greater Vancouver area. Surjeet was carrying her second child when her

husband left her. She describes the first two to three years after her marital breakup as being the bad years. She sought help from her parents, which she describes thus:

My Mom, when my daughter was born she used to live with me for almost three years. When I went to work or outside, she was there to take care of the baby, and because of her I was able to do what I could.

Surjeet's father had also helped her financially as much as he could to help her pay the lawyer's fee. When I asked her whether she ever sought any help in the Sikh community, she said that she was not aware of any program that helped women like her. Moreover, she too showed concern in seeking help in her ethnic community.

I do not talk to everyone because everybody's view is different and sometimes when they talk they will say this should have been like this, or that should have been like that. They also say that Oh! How difficult it must be for you, what are you going to do with your life?

Instead of seeking help and support from her ethnic community, Surjeet looked elsewhere and sees a counselor regularly. She states:

When I go to my counselor's office, I feel like I have come to my parent's house, I am very comfortable, actually more than that. When I leave home to go to her office I am usually upset but while coming back, I come back a stronger woman, she injects life in me.

Among all the participants, Surjeet is the one with no formal education. She had studied up to grade 11 in India. After coming to Canada she worked on farms. However, at the time of this interview she was running two small businesses from her home; one is a house cleaning service, and one as a home day care provider for which she took a short training offered by her local community centre. She has made a new circle of friends of mostly single mothers.

The four educated women were employed at the time of their divorce and had good income. None, except Hemant, had any relatives living in this city. However, everyone received

emotional support from their natal family, though it was through hand-written letters. Other than Bimla, no one thought about going back to India. Queenie said that she did not want to raise her children in India but did not tell the reason why. Manju said that she never thought about it seriously because her children were in their late teens. Hemant said that she was too old to go back and because her parents were no more and siblings were spread all over the world. The reason Bimla did not go back is as follows:

Everybody from home was pleading to go back to India, I resisted. I resisted because I grew up in a very protected atmosphere and my family is very well to do there. So the struggle that I had been going through, I would not be able to do that on my own. If I had gone back to India, because since they love me, they would always help me. I would not have grown. I would have just listened to them and that is why I decided that I would stay here.

All four of these highly educated women had gone through changes in their social network and were able to reconstruct it. They faced loneliness at times, but instead of despairing over it they overcame the situation mostly by self-reflection. Hemant says it very poignantly, stating, “I suppose you get used somehow to loneliness. It takes a long time for the loneliness to change into solitude.” Hemant’s elder brother lived in Vancouver, however he did not approve of her decision to leave her husband. Hemant said:

Sister-in-law was very supportive like I could talk to her about anything and specially because she was a physician, she was good person to talk to, but I did not go very much there because I knew how disapproving my brother was.

Most of these four women did not seek any monetary help from their family or friends. Since Bimla’s child was only 5 years old at the time of her separation, she needed some child-minding help from her friends from time to time. Bimla’s child also had a medical condition, which was challenging. Bimla was constrained by her professional commitment and needed to spend more time with her child. She made the serious decision to leave her scientific field and join a service-oriented profession. This decreased her income drastically.

Within my small sample, the few findings that stand out are as follows. All six received support, mainly emotional, from their natal families. This made a positive impact on all of them, as none of them felt banished by their family. The second finding was that educated women in my sample were employed, with good income at the time of their divorce. The third finding is the role of culturally sensitive counseling services. Only two of the six women I interviewed had seen a professional counselor. Both of them strongly stated that the support they received was invaluable. This is understandable, as unlike the other four educated women in my sample who had been divorced for a longer time and had the human agency to self-reflect, Ompreet and Surjeet were younger, and the time lapsed from divorce was not as long as the other four. The last and most perplexing fact that stood out was that almost all of them at one point in time distanced themselves from their ethnic communities, thus limiting the ethnic community as a source of support during periods of their post-divorce adjustment. Those who did seek counseling looked for a source outside of their ethnic communities.

The findings from this study mostly are in congruence with findings from previous research. Education, employment, income, supportive friends and kin were considered to be personal resources that play a big role in post-divorce adjustment (Wang & Amato, 2000). Among all these resources, education seems to be the most critical one. Educated people have better chances to be employed in a good-earning job. The four women who were highly educated were all gainfully employed in their respective field of education at the time of their divorces. However, the big anomaly in this theory is my participant, Ompreet's case. She is an educated, trained professional whose training is not recognized officially in Canada. Ompreet never had the opportunity to establish herself in Canada prior to her marital breakup as she had to face the problem on the day of her arrival in Canada, and on the third day her husband physically threw her out. Previous research also states that employment, which is positively related to education, not only provides employment, but divorced people who are employed have been found to have

high sense of self-worth and independence (Wang & Amato, 2000). Once again Ompreet's story matches this finding. Her unemployment is one of the factors that explain her emotional state of despair. It would not be an inaccurate statement if I say that Ompreet had to deal with not only divorce, but also adjusting to a foreign country, as well as professional frustration.

Ompreet had her natal family present within the Greater Vancouver area, and they provided emotional as well as tangible support for her. Similarly Surjeet had her family's support because they also had immigrated to Canada. The other four participants also reported having their family's support but they were not present here. In their cases the natal families provided emotional support through hand-written letters. None of these four women sought counseling, and were able to overcome the adjustment period by themselves. On the other hand, both Ompreet and Surjeet receive regular counseling. This can be attributed to the fact that the four participants who did not seek professional counseling were at least a decade older than the other two at the time of their divorce and all of them were highly educated. Previous research also found that educated people have better problem solving skills, which is very helpful in coping with changes that divorce presents (Ross & Wu, 1995). Though all six of my participants stated that all of their family and most of their friends remained in touch with them, what baffles me is the fact that all of them, at one point or other, for one reason or other, distanced themselves from their ethnic community. They felt that they could be target of gossip. For women who were employed and had professional lives, distancing away from their ethnic community may not have been as big of a problem as they were able to form a different social circle at their places of employment. However, women like Ompreet became marginalized and lived a life of isolation. This too is in line with previous findings, which state that divorced women seek friendship at their work, at their place of study, or at shared events (Albeck & Kaydar, 2002). Ompreet has yet to construct a new circle of friends.

Attitude towards divorce. In my research, I wanted to see what influence religion had on the attitude towards divorce among immigrant women from India. My participants belonged to two major religions of India: Sikhism and Hinduism. As discussed in the Literature review section, neither of these two religions have provisions for divorce in their scriptures. However, Hinduism mentions abandonment of spouse by either the wife or the husband. India has a very low rate of divorce, and I wanted to see what shaped the attitudes of my participants.

Both Ompreet and Surjeet had Sikh backgrounds. First, I asked them whether they had seen or known anyone who had gone through divorce while they were growing up in India. Surjeet, who was the youngest among my participants, said that she had a cousin who was divorced. I wanted to know her account of how she thought people treated the person who was divorced, and here is what she said:

I do not remember because I was 16 years old then, and I do not know what people talked about her, but I only recall that she was my uncle's daughter who lived in Amritsar. My aunt and uncle said that if their daughter is not happy, they support her decision to divorce, because they are educated.

Though I did not see but I definitely heard that the girls who are not good get divorced. I have heard people using such type of bad words for women whose husbands left them.

I then asked Surjeet a few questions to find out what was her perception of divorce after she was married but had not yet gone through her own divorce. She said that she thought there should be no divorce. When I asked her what her family thought of her decision to get the divorce, here is what she said:

Nobody supported me in this. I am lucky in a way that my ex-husband was so angry one day that he left on his own, but if he did not leave I do not think I had the courage to

leave him and move out and move to another house. I think I could never have accumulated the courage to leave him.

Apparently Surjeet's parents and older brothers were asking Surjeet to compromise and keep her marriage intact. They did not fully understand the trouble she was having with her husband.

Then one day after having a terrible fight, her husband left her home and never came back. Once her husband left Surjeet decided to divorce him. During the divorce process he also claimed half of the townhouse that Surjeet clearly had purchased and for which she paid the mortgage.

Surjeet's father and brothers did not like that and finally they realized that he was not a good man. They had a complete change of attitude towards her wanting to leave her husband. They changed from asking her to compromise, to asking her not to even look at her ex-husband's face. Surjeet, too, gained a different perspective about divorce.

Once I divorced, I felt good, specially when I compare the life before, the life of fights and quarrels, I feel better that I can sleep at ease, I wake up at ease, if now somebody would tell me to go back to that situation I would say No.

Surjeet could not articulate what influenced her to change her attitude towards divorce. When I asked her whether she knew the stance her religion takes on divorce, she told me that she was aware that her religion does not permit divorce, saying, "It is against divorce, it is OK if they are against divorce but everybody deserves to be happy in life, right?" When I asked her how she felt about her decision to get a divorce, she laughed and said, "I feel good, I have no problem, I am proud of myself." I then asked her where she got her strength. She said it was her job that gave her strength, and she went on to mention that it was because of her financial independence that she could hire a lawyer and win the case. She said that she felt empowered.

Ompreet also grew up in Punjab, but she had never heard of or seen anyone divorced except for some celebrity singer who was on the news. Her first encounter with someone whose husband had left her was when Ompreet was married and carrying her child.

When I was pregnant then I had met a lady whose husband was cheating on her...she was a very beautiful lady...she said that she had three children and her husband took them away from her...he put them in hostel, she said “my husband has kept a women with him and have left me”, she wasn’t divorced, she was just separated...I do not know what happened to me, I was moved by her story so when I got up to leave my water broke, so I had to have a c-section on that day and the baby arrived three weeks prematurely.

Ompreet mentioned that she had no idea that some day she would have to be in a similar predicament as the lady she met at the party. I asked her why she thought that there was no divorce in her village. Her explanation was that whenever any couple faced marital conflict the elders in the family and from the village counseled them and they were forced to stay together. She acknowledged that those were the days when she was growing up; now things are changing and divorce is not as uncommon as it used to be. I asked her what she thought was the reason for this change and she said:

I think people were not educated then. But now people know the law...they understand that if you are separated you can divorce. As far as Sikhism goes, I do not think much about that, it is a matter of time, people have become more aware about this so they act accordingly.

When asked how she felt about her decision to get a divorce, she said that it was not her decision and she had no choice but to agree to it. Nine years after her divorce, Ompreet still is not able to tell all her friends in India that she is divorced.

Three of the four remaining women did not know anyone divorced while they were growing up. Only Hemant knew a lady who was divorced and had witnessed how people used to talk disparagingly about her. When I asked Hemant whether she thought that divorce had something to do with the way people were talking about that lady, Hemant said:

My understanding is that it is because she left this man, they assumed that she is a bad woman and, you know, then she became independent and I do not know what her source of income was, but she had her own car and a driver and all that. She had a house and she would drive around, may be she had family wealth or something —so people used to say that she does this and does that.

When I asked her what she thought influenced people to think like that, Hemant said:

Because they did not like women who were different from the ordinary, they wanted them to be married and part of the family and everything—and anybody who independently decided that they did not want to live with their husbands and wanted an independent life must be bad, they assumed that she must be a bad woman, sleeping around with other men—I NEVER HEARD THAT KIND OF GOSSIP ABOUT A MARRIED WOMAN.

An interesting fact is that Hemant came to know about this lady and the gossip in a sports club where the elites of that city used to come to play tennis. Hemant's mother strictly prohibited any such gossip to be discussed in her household. As mentioned before, Hemant and Manju belonged to a sub-group within Hindu religion, where the society was matriarchal. In that society, after marriage, the husband came and lived with the wife's family. In Hemant's family, she grew up without a grandfather. She remembers vividly once asking her grandmother about this and her grandmother saying, "Oh I sent him away. I did not like him so I told him to leave." Hemant said that was the one and only time that reference to her grandfather was made in her family. After coming to Canada, Hemant did meet other people who were divorced. When I asked her how she felt about that she said, "It seemed like a natural thing to do if you do not get along with your partner. It did not seem like a bad thing to me." I asked her what she thought had influenced her the most in developing this opinion about divorce. She said:

My sense of independence, the way I was raised to value myself and live according to my values...My idea always was that a marriage should be a partnership and that you share everything, I do not think that one person decides and the other person obeys all the time.

Hemant also mentioned that, even when she came to Canada, she never thought she would one day go through divorce. I asked her whether she knew what the Hindu scriptures say about divorce and she said:

I do not think they approve of divorce I think that they generally feel that a women's duty is to serve her husband all her life but they also expect women to be respected. So I think that is really important in the Hindu religion, I mean once you marry it's your like a

partnership, with mutual respect but it doesn't actually happen like that ...you know religion is one thing and its social interpretation is another.

Hemant was able to encapsulate the essence of Geeta, the Hindu scripture.

Geeta tells you about your own strength and about your own soul and how you can develop it and how you can realize peace within yourself, so religion itself the philosophy helps you, the social structure doesn't help me, if I were to go to a temple and ask the priest he would probably tell me to go back and live with my husband, so that is why I avoid the social structure that has grown up around the Hindu religion but the philosophy itself is a very helpful one.

When I asked Hemant how she felt about getting the divorce, her answer was very much in line with the philosophy she described above.

I am very happy about it, I think it was one of the most creative things that I did for myself, because you know to make a decision that I won't accept something that is not right, that is very empowering. It leads to loneliness but its empowering at the same time, I have never regretted the decision.

When I asked her where she got her strength from she said, "From all values that I built up over my lifetime, the way I was raised." Hemant's poignant explanation very easily separated spirituality from religion.

Manju also belonged to the same sub-group as Hemant did. When I asked her whether she knew anyone who was divorced as she was growing up, her answer was:

No, we believed in the sanctity of marriage and nobody talked about divorce. Our society is matrilineal and our marriages are not the conventional Hindu marriage, it is a social contract wherein the bride comes back to live with her parents. Although now thinking back, I had a great uncle who had a broken marriage but it wasn't discussed. The word "divorce" was unheard of. Everything was hush, hush.

Manju remembered that though nobody talked about her uncle's situation, as it was considered a private matter, the implication of a 'faulty marriage' was there. While being married and living in Canada, Manju never held a strong view regarding divorce and never talked about others who were divorced. She regarded others' divorces as a private matter. She described her own divorce

as something that needed to be done but they did not go through court litigation. I then asked her what she thought Hindu religion says about divorce. She very succinctly expressed, “Individual is pure and divorce is subservient to the needs of the individual.” She, too, was able to separate the philosophy of Hinduism and the spirituality of Hinduism from the ritualistic or social part of religion.

Like most of my participants, Bimla never met anyone who was divorced while she was growing up. Although she mentions that she had heard her mother use the word almost jokingly during arguments with her father. When she moved to Canada, she met couples whose marriages subsequently broke, and describes her impressions thus:

I always thought that how come people did not get along? Why divorce has to happen, until I decided to move out—so there is reason that people cannot get along, if they do not respect each other, if they do not allow each other to grow, it ends up with divorce. It is reasonable to think that way.

In the household that Bimla grew up in, Hinduism was a part of their lives but less focus was given to rituals and more was given to philosophy and spirituality. She was also aware that in Hinduism there is no provision for divorce. This is how she saw religion:

Religion is a part of strength that bring people together but not how you do the rituals of Puja...that is why I say it was more spiritual to me than the religion, Hinduism has most definitely helped [me] to develop a kind of spirituality.

For Bimla, respect for her individuality was the most important thing. She did not feel that she was given any respect in her marriage. She did not want her child to grow up witnessing that. When I asked her how she felt about her decision to get a divorce, she said, “Good, yes very good that I have been able to take the decision.” She also goes on to say that coming to terms with her post-divorce life was not easy. There were days she felt lonely, exhausted and depressed and was worried whether she would be able to stand up the next day. But with lots of self-reflection, she overcame the hurdles and never regretted her decision to leave her marriage.

It is the self-reflection—I had some kind of imagination in my mind what the married life would be —uh—it did not work out—uh—I lost my career in a way, but I have gained it too—so it is the self reflection—and I am not the only one, there are so many other people who are doing it in so many different ways.

Bimla credits her upbringing for providing her with strength, whereas Queenie, who doesn't believe in religion, said that she got her strength from her children.

The common theme that stands from the descriptions above is that most women made the decision to divorce, and none of them referred to their religion's prescription of divorce while making their decisions. Secondly, almost all of them saw education and family upbringing as being more influential in their perception of divorce than their religion. The third common theme was that most of them had not seen any divorced person while they were children. However, in their late teen years, two of them came to know a divorced person. My fourth finding was that the two participants who belonged to the sub-ethnic matriarchal community had female family members who had abandoned their husbands. However, this was not a matter of discussion in the family. Lastly almost all of them had witnessed society stigmatize women who were divorced.

Most of these findings neither contradict nor agree with previous research directly. Almost all participants stated their knowledge of what their religion prescribed when it comes to marital break up, but none of them felt restricted by it when making the decision to divorce their husbands. Manju, Bimla and Hemant held the Hindu religion in high regard, and with their developed intellectual capabilities interpreted the religious scriptures on a philosophical level. Their decisions to divorce were not influenced by what they knew the Hindu scriptures prescribed regarding marriage and divorce (Kane, 1958). My small sample was clearly delineated by two different religions and by educational qualifications. The women who were highly educated talked about self-respect, equality in marriage, and independence. These four women took the step to leave their unhappy marriage. They interpreted the religion based on philosophy and spirituality rather than functional and ritualistic prescription. Three of these four

women had a Hindu background. One of them was born in Hindu background, but did not believe in the concept of religion. One thing that was common among these four women was the fact that all four are now above 70 years old and were divorced for at least 19 years and more. They had an advantage in having experienced life more than the other two participants, who were young. Their lifetime of experience might have given them the ability to have profound insights.

For one of the Sikh women in my study, Ompreet, it was her husband who initiated divorce. Her account can be connected to previous research findings, which state that the spouse who does not take the initiative for divorce faces difficulty in accepting divorce (Emery, 1994). All through her interview Ompreet talked about how her dreams were shattered and how, even ten years after her divorce, she is not able to tell her friends in India about it. She also suffers from depression. On the other hand Surjeet, the other Sikh participant in my study took the initiative to file for divorce when her husband left their home in anger. She said her quality of life improved after the divorce, and she does not agree with what her religion says about divorce. She takes a very realistic approach to life and the right for every individual to be happy. Both Ompreet and Surjeet attributed education as being the factor responsible for the positive change in Indian society's perception of divorce.

Conclusion

Overall Analysis

The goal of my study was to explore the post-divorce experiences of immigrant women from India, noting the changes (economic, social and residential) that they experienced, the resources they used to cope with these post-divorce changes, and the effect of their religious background on their post-divorce experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted with six Indian women who had immigrated to be with their husbands in Canada, but had subsequently divorced. Key findings are summarized and potential implications of these findings for future research and policy are presented. Limitations of the sample are also discussed.

When it came to economic changes, the women in my study experienced a decrease in their income, which is in line with previous research on economic consequences for Western samples (Amato, 1994; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Gerstel, Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Morgan, 1989; Pett & Vaughan-Cole, 1986; Shapiro 1996; Weitzman, 1985), and for minority immigrant populations (Guru, 2009). The types of changes in social networks that my participants experienced were very similar to the changes faced by women in Western industrialized nations. Some saw a decrease in the size of their social networks because their friends were their husbands' friends first and chose to be loyal to the husband. One of the participants stated that their female friends saw them as a threat to their own marriages and withdrew their friendship. A unique theme was that each of my participants distanced themselves from their ethnic social circle for fear of being the target of gossip. Their apprehension seems to relate to their past experiences in India where all of them had witnessed divorced women being stigmatized. However, for five of my participants, the same experience of observing stigma toward divorced women had no notable influence on their decision to initiate divorce. For my sample, the women overcame the stigma of divorce in their own situation of obtaining a divorce,

but did not overcome the fear of being stigmatized by members of Indian society. Exploring the social stigma of divorce, and how that relates to the divorced women's experiences of divorce, is an area of future research.

My participants moved from the marital home and did not receive their fair share of marital property. Yet the women remained passive and non-litigious concerning this loss. Such an approach may be attributed to adherence to their upbringing in the traditional patriarchal system in India, where women had no right to the marital property.

Resources these women mobilized to deal with the post-divorce changes were similar to those used by contemporary women in Western countries: employment, education, tangible and emotional support from family and friends, and professional counseling. There was one key difference: each of the participants received support from her natal family. Contemporary research literature reinforces the view that South Asian families banish their divorced daughter (Amato, 1994; Guru, 2009). My data suggest that this did not happen in these cases. Whether this is due to the nature of my sample or is more far reaching is an area for future research.

Relating to family support, an additional finding that stands out is the type of family support. Though all of my participants reported having family support, only two of them had family living in the Greater Vancouver area. The families of four other participants were in India and the support they provided were emotional and through hand written letters. The two women who had their families present are also the ones who sought professional counseling. For most of my participants, emotional support from kin appears to have had a more positive impact on coping with divorce than physical presence and tangible help.

As others have stated, education is valuable as a resource only when it provides employment (Wang & Amato, 2000). Of my participants, those who were better educated

seemed to possess a better self-concept and used self-reflection to cope with the divorce. Professional counseling was a resource for coping for the two participants who had less education and employment.

My participants came from two major religious backgrounds, Hindu and Sikh. Neither of these two religions have any provision for divorce. Indians in general are religious people and they celebrate numerous religious festivals. The Indian Diaspora in Greater Vancouver is no exception. Some of the Sikh and Hindu religious festivals are gaining popularity in the mainstream society. Given this social backdrop, I was expecting to find religion to play a significant role in the post-divorce experiences of my participants. Such was not the case. Each of the participants reported that they did not refer to religious prescriptions regarding marriage and divorce for guidance. While the educated participants articulated and interpreted their religious philosophies to justify divorce, the two women with less or no education attributed the role of education and general knowledge concerning divorce law as being the key factors responsible for the changing of societal attitude towards divorce in a positive direction. A conjecture could be made that the role of religion in how Indian women perceive divorce is beginning to change for some women in the Indian diaspora. While religion had no stated effect on my participants' attitudes about divorce, additional research is necessary to note if those holding strong religious and cultural beliefs have difficulties in their post-divorce situations because of such attitudes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several implications that can be drawn from the findings of this study. First, it illustrates the need for raising awareness of women's marital rights among immigrants. This is needed, as most of the participants of my study did not receive their share of marital property

and some were deprived of pension funds. Second, enforcement of divorce law regarding child support payments is needed, especially in the immigrant communities because of the propensity of some fathers who work in the informal economy or cross international boundaries to elude payment of child support. Women in my study were aware of the ways their ex-husbands were eluding the government but were helpless to do anything about it. Third, education and employment are critical in post-divorce economic adjustment. A unique aspect for immigrant women is that their foreign credentials may not be recognized in Canada, as was the case with one of the participants of this study whose teaching degree from India was not given credit. Though women are coming to Canada under the family class category and are supposed to be supported by their husbands, it is necessary for some of those women who come with professional training to be acknowledged in their field. Providing affordable training programs to upgrade their credentials to meet the standards of the Canadian system would also be helpful, and may be especially important for those with reduced incomes post-divorce. Fourth, new immigrant women should be made aware of different organizations that provide culturally sensitive counseling as a resource that they can tap into. In my study, women who were not educated or less educated benefitted immensely by getting counseling from an organization that takes a multicultural approach to counseling. These organizations are not connected to any particular ethnic group, and as a result my participants were not afraid of being the targets of community gossip. However, both of the women who sought professional help from that particular organization were advised to do so by a friend or a family member. Finally, immigrant women who are sponsored by their husbands should be made aware of the Canadian immigration law and should be informed about the limited control their husbands have over them when it comes to their personal freedom. This could be very helpful for women like Ompreet whose husband had no intention of carrying out his marital commitment to her, and she learned of this upon her arrival to Canada.

Limitations of This Study

Though the findings of this study are valuable, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The first limitation is the small sample size. After using various avenues to publicize my study, I had only 16 women who responded; among the 16, only six met the criteria to be included in the study. In the last few years, several incidents of domestic violence and spousal murders took place in the Indo-Canadian community of the Greater Vancouver area. This brought negative attention from the media. As a result, recently women's organizations and ethnic cultural groups have become cautious about talking to outsiders about women's issues. This could be a reason that not many women were willing to participate in this study, apart from the fact that the topic is a personal and sensitive matter.

The second limitation is that my sample lacks heterogeneity. India is a land of multiple religions, and cultures as well as social classes. My original plan was to include women from at least three major religious backgrounds, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. My sample consists of two women from Sikh religious backgrounds and three from Hindu. One participant was born in a Hindu family but she did not believe in the concept of religion. In order to recruit participants from the Muslim community I contacted several mosques, Islamic student societies, and Islamic women's groups, as well as my personal contacts. Unfortunately I did not get any response. I made a similar effort to recruit Christian women from India by contacting their cultural group. They informed me that in their group there were no women who fit the recruitment criteria. That could be true, as it was a group of Roman Catholics. I was not able to find any Protestant group or individual.

Among the six participants of this study, four were a cohort of highly educated elderly women who have been divorced for a long time. These were not the only similarities among

them. Four of them happen to come from three different geographical regions of India but all of them belonged to elite Hindu families. Their formative years were spent in a historically significant time when India got her independence, and most educated classes were involved in creating a new nation with a very liberal vision. On the other hand, the two young Sikh women who participated grew up in rural Punjab and came from farming communities.

Due to the above-mentioned limitations, findings of this research do not represent the experiences of all immigrant women from India. However, the findings of this study suggest possible future research involving a larger and more diverse sample (concerning education, employment, and religion) to better understand the experiences of divorced Indian immigrant women. Research is needed to understand the experiences of women belonging to Islam and other religions of India. Most importantly, research is required to understand the divorce experience of more recent immigrant women from India.

There are three areas where this exploratory study contributes new knowledge. First, rather than alienating or banishing their daughters at the time of divorce, natal families in the Indian community have shifted to standing behind their daughters and providing them with emotional and tangible support. The second finding is that women who go through divorce after their immigration tend to fear cultural rejection from the community. As a result they distance themselves from their own ethnic communities regardless of whether or not their community shows signs of banishing or rejecting them. Finally, women are interpreting religious philosophies to support their actions involving divorce rather than accepting what is prescribed by their religion or abandoning their religion. These exploratory findings within this small sample await future research with a larger, diverse sample.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Face-to-Face Interview Questions

Hello... As I explained earlier, I'd like to talk with you about your experiences after your divorce. To understand your experience it is helpful to have some information about your work, your family before your marriage and before your divorce. As you know you are free to not answer any of the questions if you want. So first some questions about your background...

A. Demographic information

1. First language:
2. Highest level of education and the country where obtained:
3. Did you hold a job before you were married?
 - type of job:
4. Did you hold a job when you were married?
 - type of job:
5. What is your current job?
6. Religion
 - what religion were you brought up in?
 - what was your husband's religion?
 - what is your religion now?
7. Do you have children?
 - number of children:
 - ages:
 - custody arrangements:
8. Age
9. Was your marriage arranged?
10. Where do the members of your family of birth live?
11. Do you have any relatives living in the Greater Vancouver area? If yes, how are you related to them?
12. When you were married how many members were there in the household?
 - What was the combined annual income?
13. What was your marital house like?
 - Did you own your house when you were married?

- Who paid the mortgage?
- Do you own or rent your house now?

“Thanks...now I am going to start with questions about your experience after divorce...”(pause for 30 seconds and then start)

B. Semi-structured Interview Questions (with the participant’s permission this part of the interview will be audio taped. If they do not agree to be taped, I will ask whether I can take notes during the interview).

1. Think of the time you were married and think of the time after your divorce, and please tell me
 - how did your financial situation change?
 - tell me about your social circle, did it change when you got divorced?
 - how about your residence?
 - did you ever think of moving back to India?
 - what made you not move back to India?
 - how do you feel about that?
2. You mention changes in your social circle after your divorce, why do you think that is?
 - How does it make you feel?
3. How did your contact with extended family from both sides, change?
 - Why do you think that is?
 - How does it make you feel?
4. How would you describe the changes in your life since your divorce?

Pause few seconds then inform the respondents that the next set of questions would be focused towards how she used her social and personal resources after divorce.

5. Since your divorce how did your family and friends help you?
6. Did you seek out any help in the community when you finally separated? Please describe the type of help it provided.
 - Was it from your ethnic community?
 - How did it feel to turn to this organization to seek help?
 - How did you find out about the help and why you chose the one you did?

7. How do you think your religion has provided support?
8. a. You mentioned that you were working when you were married, did you have to change your job after you separated? If so, why?
 - Who handled your finances while you were married?
 - How did you feel about this arrangement?
- b. You mentioned that you were not working while you were married but now you work.
 - How did you find your job?
 - How do you think your education in India has helped you to find the job you are doing?
 - Are your earnings the only source of income?
 - If the answer to the previous question is “No” then ask about the other sources of income: spousal support, alimony to be specific, child support too.
9. What do you think of your job?
10. Now I would ask you to go down your memory lane and think of the time when you were growing up, and try to answer the following questions.
 - When you were growing up did you know anyone who was divorced?
 - How did people treat them?
 - Was their divorce an issue in how people saw them?
 - What do you think influenced people to behave that way towards the divorced person?
11. Now think of the time after you got married and try to answer the following questions.
 - How did you perceive the concept of Divorce?
 - What influenced you the most in thinking the way you just described it?
 - What did you think of the people who got divorced?
 - Once again what made you think the way you just described it?
 - How does your family of birth feel about your divorce?
 - How do you feel about it?
12. How does the religion feel about divorce?
 - Has this affected your coping? Please explain.
13. How do you feel about your decision to get a divorce or agree to it?
14. We have almost arrived at the end of the interview, I will ask you two last questions.
 - Take a few minutes and please tell me what was the most difficult thing for you in your post-divorce experience?

- What helped you the most in experiencing the post-divorce life?

Pause for a minute then ask

15. May I contact you in future if I need any clarification?

Thanks.

Appendix B: Initial Contact Letter

About My Project

My name is Supriya Bhattacharyya. I am doing my MA in Family Studies at the University of British Columbia. This project is for my Master's thesis. The project will explore the post-divorce experiences of Indian immigrant women. Though domestic violence in the Indo-Canadian community has been studied, little research has been done regarding the post-divorce experiences of these women in the same community. I will look at how divorce affects their economic, social and residential situation; how they use their resources to cope with the changes; and finally, I will investigate how their religion affects their perception of divorce. By exploring these issues through interviews in the Vancouver area, my study will contribute to our understanding of how these women deal with divorce in Canada.

I plan to interview 30 Indian women from the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities who have come to Canada after their marriage and have later gotten divorced. I will have a taped face-to-face interview with each of these women. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and any participant can withdraw during the process. A very high standard of confidentiality will be maintained and the identity of participants will not be disclosed. The participant will have to sign a consent form. If you have any question about this project please feel free to contact my supervisor Professor Phyllis Johnson, Department of Sociology.

Thanks for showing interest and help.

Appendix C: Community Assistance Resources

List of Organizations Who Can Provide Help to Women in Distress

1. Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Society

Ph # (604) 436-1025

2. Coquitlam Women's Transition House, Port Coquitlam

(604) 464-2020

3. Helping Spirit Lodge, Vancouver.

(604) 872-6649

4. Kate Booth House, Vancouver

Ph. # (604) 872-7779

5. Monarch Place, New Westminster

Ph. # (604) 521-1888

6. Nova Transition House, Richmond

Ph. # (604) 270-4911

7. Options: Services Communities Society.

Ruby Dosanjh: Women Outreach Worker
Phone: 604-572-5883

8. Powell Place Emergency Shelter, Vancouver

Ph. # (604) 606-0403

9. Punjabi Women's Association

Ph. # (604) 581-6941

10. South Asian Women's Center

Ph. # (604) 254-9626

11. Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Center

Ph. # (604) 872-8212

12. Virginia Sam Transition House, Surrey

(604) 596-4321