BECOMING SIKH: SIKH YOUTH IDENTITIES AND THE MULTICULTURAL IMAGINARY

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the lives of second and third generation Sikh youth in the Greater Vancouver area in relation to the ways they think about their identities. As racialized youth growing up in a major Canadian urban center, being situated within an array of various ethnic, racial, religious, and gender differences plays an important role in how participants recognize what it means to be Sikh, and the potential to become differently. Particularly relevant in this study is an investigation into the ways competing discourses of multiculturalism both facilitates the way participants “do” their identities, and also shapes the ways Sikh youth come to (mis)recognize the multicultural “others”. Through small group and individual interviews, youth theorizing on the repetition, regulation and re-signification of identity categories is explored. Relying significantly on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, and Michel Foucault’s discussions of discourse, knowledge, and power, multiculturalism is taken up as an important societal discourse which requires racialized youth to perform their identities in everyday multicultural context such as schools. In other words, multiculturalism is theorized beyond policy and curriculum debates to investigate how youth “do multiculturalism” in different contexts through various embodied practices which constitute and regulate claims to a Sikh identity.

Based on an analysis of interview transcripts with 25 self-identified Sikh youth (ages 13-25), it is argued that an important consequence of living in a “multicultural” society as understood by participants is the recognition of self and others through three frames of recognition. These “multicultural frames of recognition” include the ways Sikh youth come to recognize a discursive whiteness, discourses about racialized others, and discourses about other Sikh communities. It is argued that subjection through the discourses which structure these three “multicultural frames of recognition” contribute to participants’ understanding of the diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identities in modern day Vancouver, while foreshadowing the constitution and constraints of the identification process for Sikh youth within the multicultural imaginary.
Lay Summary

The goal of this dissertation is to address how Sikh youth come to understand their identities in Greater Vancouver. A major point of analysis is how youth understandings of multiculturalism informs the ways they perform their identities in everyday contexts such as schools, and also structures how participants recognize the multicultural “others”. The relation to “others” is informed by discourses about race, ethnicity, religion, and gender which structure understanding of difference, and constitute and regulate what it means to be Sikh. It is argued that discourses of multiculturalism set the stage for three multicultural frames of recognition to inform participant understandings of the self and other: inter-group differences between Sikhs and living in a “white society”, inter-group differences between Sikhs and “racialized” others, and intra-group differences within the Sikh community. These frames require recognition of differences, and the significance for the constitution of youth subjectivities and identities will be investigated.
Preface

This dissertation is the original work of the author, Kalbir Heer. I conceptualized and designed the study. In addition, I conducted all interviews and analyzed the data with guidance from committee members who will be recognized in the Acknowledgements section.

Ethics approval was obtained from The University of British Columbia, Behavioural Research Ethics Board on February 2, 2012. The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board number is H11-02517.
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CHAPTER 1

Sikh Youth and the Multicultural Imaginary

“We are a super multicultural school, but white society just thinks we are one big brown lump. Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim are just a big brown crew. But I’m a Sikh. I’m not doing Muslim and Hindu things.” (Simran, 14 year old Sikh female).

“In school its multicultural stations. Like go check out what the brown boys are doing because they’re a big topic nowadays. Then go check out what the Asian girls are doing because they’re so good. Or what about those amrit-shuck (baptized Sikh) turban wearing girls, they’re all doing their religious thing together. It’s all about watching and learning” (Jasmine, 16 year old Sikh female).

Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, brown, Asian, baptized. On the surface, it makes perfect sense that Jasmine and Simran would use these identity markers to recognize the various “others” they encounter on a daily basis. After all, they attend high school in a Vancouver area suburb alongside students with multiple cultural affiliations, play on sports teams with youth from diverse religious backgrounds, commute with immigrants from different countries around the world, and build relationships within heterogeneously linguistic peer groups. As indicated by the quotes above, being situated within “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007) is not an exercise in passivity. Instead, cultural diversity requires that individuals actively make sense of, organize, and negotiate multiple differences such as race, ethnicity, and religion. Importantly, as Jasmine makes references to “boys” and “girls”, race, ethnicity, and religion might be the obvious categories associated with common sense understandings of cultural diversity, but gendered expectations and behaviors also play a role in how she recognizes “others”. Clearly, all of these differences, and many more not mentioned, contextually make some difference in how Simran and Jasmine recognize and reiterate the identities of the “others” they encounter in schools and beyond.

At the same time Simran and Jasmine recognize the “other”, they are also making claims to their own identity investments as evidenced by Simran’s declaration, “I’m a Sikh”. Simran’s self-recognition

1 All names in this dissertation are pseudonyms.
2 The participants in this study often refer to themselves and other Sikhs as “brown”.
in this quote is partially made possible by defining herself more clearly than “white society” who she feels recognize her as part of a “big brown lump”. In other words, by stating she is “doing Sikh” and definitely “not doing Hindu and Muslim things”, Simran bestows recognition on others (Hindu and Muslim) while evidencing her own desire to be recognized as a Sikh. What is suggested through the way Simran differentiates herself is that she has some prior knowledge of ethno-racial categories of identification. The focal point of this dissertation is how participants such as Jasmine and Simran come to recognize ethno-racial differences and how these differences might operate to constitute subjectivities and identities. What prior knowledge and practices, or “doings”, are cited in recognizing who one is, who one is not, and who one might become? How and why might discursive boundaries between the self and “others” be opened and foreclosed in the process of constituting the self and “other” in the multicultural?

Lower Mainland of Vancouver?

**Imagining Multiculturalism**

Jasmine and Simran’s use of the concept “multiculturalism” provides an entry point into how recognition and negotiation of differences might operate. In fact, in most of the interviews conducted for this study, “multiculturalism” or “multicultural” was referenced by participants in making sense of ethno-racial differences in the Greater Vancouver Region. In and of itself, the idea that Canadian youth would use “multiculturalism” to help organize differences might appear unremarkable. Certainly since the early 1970’s Canada’s national investment in multiculturalism as official government policy has left an imprint on citizens and social institutions (Guo & Wong, 2015). My interest in multiculturalism in this dissertation is not in the intricacies of policy, nor do I intend to define specific multicultural typologies. Instead I analyze multiculturalism’s utility and drawbacks as a complicated set of discourses relied on by participants in identifying the self, and various “others”. Put differently, I search for ways youth might

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3 Ethno-racial differences denote the slippages between conceptualization of race, ethnicity, and religion in how participants identify themselves and others (Goldberg, 2009; Aly, 2015)

4 “Multicultural” in this sense is used to describe societies where the fact of ethno-racial difference is commonplace.

5 A more detailed account of Canadian multiculturalism will be presented in chapter 3.
deploy multiculturalism as a normative discourse in partially constituting their Sikh identities, and the identities of “others” in what I term the Canadian multicultural imaginary. By multicultural imaginary, I do not simply refer to the fact of ethno-racial difference in modern, globalized societies such as Canada. Rather, by multicultural imaginary I refer to the reiteration, regulation, and re-signification of multiple and contested discursive understandings of “multiculturalism” and the material effects of these understandings on Sikh youth subjectivities and identities.

**Framing the Multicultural Others**

Jasmine and Simran suggest that the recognition of “others” is not a straightforward or predictable process. By this I refer to three different, yet interrelated ways of understanding difference that Simran and Jasmine allude to in their quotes: a.) “white society”; b) “Muslim, Hindu, Asian”; and c.) “amrit-shuck (baptized)”. Although it might seem obvious these categories represent some form of difference, I argue the nuances and overlap between the conceptualization of these differences might develop unique insights into multicultural identifications. By recognizing differences between the self and a generalized white society, the self and other racialized youth, and the self in relation to “other” Sikhs, Simran and Jasmine attempt to make sense of the complexity of diversity in their everyday interactions. In other words, they do not simply recognize difference in relation to living in white society, but see differences in their contingency in relation to living in a white society, in relation to other racialized bodies, and in relation to other Sikhs. I argue that these differences represent three multicultural “frames of recognition” (Butler, 2009) through which participants constitute their own identities in relation to “others” they encounter within the multicultural imaginary.

Suggested in this version of recognition is something beyond simple deficit models. For example, Charles Taylor’s (1994) theorizing relies on a group in power to possess the ability to grant recognition to a subordinate group which desires a positive form of recognition. For Taylor, injustices can be remedied with the proper kind or amount of recognition in multicultural societies. Similarly, Honneth (1995)

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6 Multicultural frames of recognition will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4.
connects recognition with self-realization as various groups struggle to attain the proper kinds of recognition in order to fulfill their psychological needs and wellbeing (Honneth, 2007). In other words there is always an individual or group which can be made more productive, happy, or whole as long as some identified authority “has the power to remedy this recognition deficit by granting the recognition which is sought” (McBride 2013, p. 6). As a result, “the solution to such issues lies in either (a) expanding or adjusting current patterns of recognition; or (b) instantiating forms of recognition where they were previously withheld” (McQueen, 2015, p. 44). Yet Simran and Jasmine’s quotes might be read to disrupt these deficit, or top down, models and therefore account for ways recognition might be sought and given according to the norms which structure the scene of recognition (Butler, 1997b). These norms will be addressed in the following chapters as that which allow participants to recognize the identities of “white people”, “Asian girls”, “brown boy”, “Muslims, and “Hindus”, and also demand recognition from these subjects. It also becomes difficult to identify a single group that possesses the power of recognition, what the effects of recognition might be, or how power can be overcome in the changing contexts through which recognition is demanded.

Within this project, participants claims to an ethno-racial identity or labeling others is not considered automatic, obvious, or true. Claims to identities are mired in a process of contestation, negotiation, and re-signification as participants such as Jasmine are “watching and learning” how to perform their own identities, and how others perform theirs (Butler, 1990). This means paying attention to how participants are “doing” Sikh and how they theorize others are “doing white”, “doing Asian girl”, “doing brown boy”, “doing amrit-shuck (baptized) turban wearing girl”. Therefore, this study investigates the potential of taking up identities in the process of constantly becoming something different through multicultural frames of recognition. This does not reduce the significance of recognition and feelings of belonging to “real” ethno-racial communities. Instead, the focus of this dissertation is on how young people employ “discourses of knowledge” (Lei, 2003, p. 159) in “a quest to represent a “real” by assuring…the veracity of the “real” and one’s interpretation of it” (Talburt, 2004, p. 80).
In the bounds of this dissertation, I do not attempt to define what a Sikh is, how a Sikh should behave, or advocate for a particular faction within various Sikh communities. In addition, nowhere in these pages do I protest, encourage, or deny any participants’ claims to a Sikh identity. For example, for some being Sikh might be a definitive religious signifier; for others being Sikh might be more akin to an ethnic identity; and for others being Sikh might be seen as being interchangeable with other identity markers such as East Indian, South Asian, Punjabi, brown, or upanay (one of our people). My interest is in how participants interpret, perform, and practice being Sikh in the context of multicultural frames of recognition in all its complication, negotiation, and surveillance. Therefore, I utilize theorists who take up identities as a process of “knowledge in the making” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 1) about the self, which points to “the necessity of fluidity as a productive” (Loutzenheiser, 2005, p. 35) in thinking through how youth of color might be constituted as subjects in multicultural societies\(^7\). It is to a more thorough discussion about the purpose of the study and the theories which inform the project to which I now turn.

**Purpose of the Study**

An important concern of this project is to add to social-science research on multiculturalism by pushing the boundaries of strict policy, pedagogy, and curriculum analysis. Although not divorced from policy, pedagogy, and curriculum multiculturalism is taken up as discourses which produces multiple knowledges and multiple material effects. “Normative” multicultural discourses\(^8\), and competing renditions, can be analyzed for the ways subjects’ actions, bodies, thoughts, practices, and behaviors might be affected. How multicultural discourses are performed, embodied, reiterated, and resisted within educational contexts and wider society opens space for considering the effects of these discourses on subjectivities and identities of Sikh youth. The ways multicultural discourses both require “labeling, reducing and reifying differentiated experiences under convenient ethnic labels” (Aly, 2015, p. 5), and the way subjects reiterate and resist these identity categories is a primary concern of the dissertation. In other

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\(^7\) The implications and significance for schools, educators, and youth studies will be elaborated on at the end of chapter.

\(^8\) “Normative multiculturalism” will be addressed more thoroughly in chapter 4.
words, claims to identities such as “Sikh” (or any other socio-cultural group) may be seen as a productive aspect of identification, and yet might also produce slippages, contestation, and new paths in coming to know the self. Therefore, how the body and multicultural discourses become implicated within each other is an important point of analysis.

This project is an exploration of difference, how participants come to recognize difference, and how differences might be structured in culturally diverse societies. In particular I investigate the usefulness of multicultural frames of recognition in an attempt to ascertain how Sikh youth come to know the self and “others”. In doing so, data analysis will focus on the three aspects of difference already mentioned above: Specifically, it will be argued that a.) inter-group differences between Sikh youth and a discursive “whiteness”, b.) inter-group differences between Sikh youth and other racialized communities (Hindu, Muslim, Asian), and c.) intra-group differences within self-identified Sikh communities (brown and turban wearing) are interrelated frames of recognition through which the complexity of difference are negotiated by participants. This means addressing the gap in the literature on how Sikh youth specifically negotiate whiteness, racialization, and differences in their self-identified communities in the process of performing their identities in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver (Judge, 2003; Nayar, 2004; Sayani; 2013).

One reason for these conversations is that participants in this study live in multicultural neighborhoods, attend schools with large numbers of other Sikhs, and relationally situate their identities within these contexts. Therefore, seriously thinking through inter and intra-group power relations allows for an analysis of identities which moves beyond myopic ways of understanding relationality (Anthias, 2002). Namely, paradigms where youth of color are only ever spoken about in relation to a monolithic “white” other. I do not intend to diminish the significance of “whiteness” in general as the concept will be clarified and used throughout this dissertation. Rather I argue that there are other factors which might be contextually as significant and interrelated. For example, how diversity within various Sikh communities and differences between Sikh youth and other youth of color in multicultural contexts work in
conjunction to inform a sense of self in places such as schools. These considerations were instrumental in thinking through the original questions which inform the current study and subsequent data analysis.

The project adds to, extends, and re-directs social science research on Sikh youth through the novel ways subjects perform identities (Butler, 2004). To this end, a major point of analysis attends to the various ways discursive categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, and gender are “experienced, enacted, and embodied in daily life” (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p. 3) within the multicultural imaginary. I look for ways these categories are co-constitutive of each other in how subjects recognize what “being Sikh” is and how they recognize “others”. Therefore, this is not a dissertation about gender, or about race, or about religion, or about ethnicity in categorical isolation. Instead this work takes what Nayak and Kehily (2008) call a more “holistic approach to the subject” (p. 4) where categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and religion are spoken about in their contingencies. This means any attempt to ascertain the different ways gender, race, ethnicity, and religion are relationally and contextually addressed sometimes requires speaking about how discursive categories require each other for recognition to take place. Therefore, this dissertation does not sustain focus on any one marker of identity, but attempts to weave in and out of categories as their contingencies are deemed important points of analysis.

The significance of schools as institution where multicultural discourses are enacted and contested will be discussed throughout the dissertation (Lund & Carr, 2010). The focus upon youth of color has been well documented in educational literature on Muslim (Archer, 2003), Asian and Pacific Islanders (Teranishi & Kim, 2017), Latino (Reed, 2015), Indigenous (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011) and black youth (Gordon & Zinga, 2012) in how racialized youth comprehend belonging to communities, their place within society, and how they understand social differences. However, school based practices and interactions will be analyzed specifically for how multicultural frames of recognition might constitute, regulate, and discipline student identities in schools. As a result, within this project schools are not considered either purely restrictive or productive spaces, but are places where competing relations of power circulate to create the “subjects of education” (Youdell, 2006, p. 511).
The specificity of the Lower Mainland will be elaborated on in asking why Sikh youth should be studied at this time, in this place, in the given manner. The Greater Vancouver Regional District has proven to be an important global hub for Sikh cultural affairs within the diaspora for a number reasons which will be discussed later in this chapter. As a result, discourses about Sikhs in the “local cultures” (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p. 1) the participants situate themselves within is a key point of analysis. Contexts matter and there is no way to replicate salient factors in identification between Sikh youth in the Vancouver and elsewhere. Therefore, for Sikhs in the Greater Vancouver area (or anywhere else) the social fields in which they operate might be uniquely influenced by factors such as historical immigration to the region, government policies regulating migration, the cultural and economic diversification of cultural communities, and the political discourses normalized within localities (Todd, 2013). This does not mean the Lower Mainland is isolatable from theorizing global, international, or transnational identities. I argue that the global and the local are used in tandem to produce unique identity possibilities for participants.

Finally, the study opens spaces for Sikh youth to explore, explain, and translate their own experiences in their own words. This is not to say their voices represent truth or that I am the conduit, but rather to allow self-explanations to emerge, through talk, in order to explicate discourses relevant to youth lives (Lather, 2009). In regards to youth studies that focuses on, rather than with subjects, there is a temptation to valorize youth voice as either authentic, something that can be captured, or capable of speaking for the group (Orner, 1992; Lesko, 2001; Mazzei, 2009). The urgency to add the voice of racialized groups within research is important, but to treat these voices “as innocent, monolithic or singular, as if the voice says it all” (Jackson, 2003, p. 697) ignores the multiple ways identities and subjectivities come to be constituted (Ellsworth, 1989). These positions are untenable within this dissertation because they presuppose that one is capable of accurately narrating the self in relation to questions asked. Voice, and the knowledge produced through voice, is “not out there wholly formed, waiting to be revealed” (Loutzenheiser, 2007, p. 113). Instead, voice is socially mediated through power relations which in turn allows for claims to specific identities (Lather, 2009). Taking up voice in this way
does not erase Sikh youth as producers of knowledge, but asks what is considered voice, how does voice function in the data, through what discourses and which omissions. Therefore, adding the voices of Sikh youth to the corpus of youth studies and educational research is an important step in analyzing the ways multicultural identities are discursively constituted.

**Setting-Up the Study: What is to come?**

The remainder of the chapter is designed to further explore the theoretical considerations which inform the study through discussions of the constitution of subjects. Specific concepts will be defined in their present usage in order to clarify terms to contextualize the subsequent data analysis chapters. A literature review focusing on the importance of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion in constituting subjectivities will situate the various ways Sikh youth are conceptualized in current research. This will be followed by a brief account of the connections between Sikhs and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and a discussion about the potential significance of this project for educational research, school practices, and youth studies in general. Finally, an outline of the remainder of the dissertation will be elaborated upon to provide a map for issues and topics which form the bulk of the project.

**Theoretical Framework: Subjects, Subjection, and Subjectivity**

Throughout this project I consider how theories of the subject influenced by Michel Foucault (1980) and Judith Butler (2004) might be used to analyze “how the self comes into being, what the costs of the self might be, and how the self might be made again differently” (Youdell, 2006, p. 512). A major point of concern for these theorists is “with the inherited and constructed meanings that position and regulate how social life is narrated and lived” (Britzman, 1994, p. 56). Claims to identities are understood as produced within, and through complex relations between how knowledge is perpetuated through discourses across multiple social contexts in which subjects interact (Foucault, 2002/1969). The constitution of subjects through the power of normative discourses to naturalize understandings of categories such as sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion underscores the process of subjection, or “literally, the making of a subject” (Butler, 1997b, p. 83) which produces various material effects on and through bodies. Further, Butler (1997b) states, “subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally
acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject” (p. 84). Subjection as a process is ongoing because power does not simply stop once a subject “activates” or declares themselves, for example, a Sikh girl, or Sikh boy. Instead “acts, gestures, enactments generally constructed are performatives in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Butler, 1990, p. 173). For example, the category gender is often “known” through visual cues such as styles of dress, mascularity, the way hair is worn, or less overt citations such as participating in specific occupations (such as nursing), sports (mixed martial arts), leisure activities (home decorating), or courses in school (technological studies). Each of these seemingly “innocent” choices are more thoroughly examined through the power of subjection, as Foucault (1982) intimates:

power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual,
marks him [sic] by his own individuality attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.
It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. (p. 781)

Foucaultian theories on the constitution of subjectivities and identities rely on the important relationship between discourse, knowledge, and power (Foucault, 1980). Discourse, knowledge, and power often results in the perpetuation of “commonsense” understandings which can sanction various forms of discipline and regulation for youth identities (Lei, 2003). The discourses which produce knowledge are understood as “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak” (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). Thus, power is more complicated than that of a sovereign authority exerting itself vertically over docile subjects with easily replicated consequences. Instead, power is enacted horizontally through various ways subjects are placed under surveillance and participate in their own regulation, while also productive in constituting possibilities for resistance (Foucault, 1975). In relation to this study, there are instances where Sikh youth evidence the capacity to “recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 4). At
other times, participants reiterate normative gender, race, religious, and ethnic discourses through regulating their actions and behaviors. The significance of this approach is that it focuses on disrupting assumed categories such as Sikh, boys, girls, and youth as more than just easily labelled subjects of education, and moves toward thinking which discourses and material consequences are relevant to subjects as they think about their identities (Davies, 2006).

Mills (1997) states that while “Foucault suggests that discourses structure our sense of reality, he does not see these systems as being abstract or enclosed” (p. 46). In other words, the fact that “discourses inform the extent to which we can think and act only within certain parameters at each historical conjuncture” (Davies, 2004, p. 4) implies that subjects have agency in posing a challenge, altering, and resisting dominant narratives about themselves. Subjects, such as the Sikh youth participants in this dissertation, can act with intent, however this intent is not the capacity of an all knowing subject free from discursive limitations. Instead, “discursive agency” (Butler, 1997a, p. 127) accounts for how discourses can misfire, circulate in new contexts, or can be appropriated differently by subjects where “the potential for the meanings of these (discourses) to shift and/or for subordinate discourses to unsettle these remains” (Youdell, 2006, p. 515). As Butler (1997a) comments, “In this sense, disciplinary discourse does not unilaterally constitute a subject in Foucault, or rather, if it does, it simultaneously constitutes the condition for the subject’s de-constitution” (p. 99). Therefore, a politics can be built around “the break-up of cultural monoliths” (Lather, 2006, p. 43) as participants in this study evidence being constituted through discourses and are able to engage in acts of resistance. Resistances will be addressed throughout this project in upcoming chapters as participant share how limitations are constructed around their identities in places such as schools, and how youth conceive of breaking from these limitations.

Subjectivities and identities in this project are linked to the reiterative ways discursive categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion are normalized, regulated, disciplined, and re-interpreted. Often, the terms subjectivity and identity are used interchangeably, but in this dissertation they are considered a continuation of each other. The process of subjection, the discursive play of power, regulation, and surveillance initiates subjectivity or a sense of ourselves. However, the cultivation of subjectivities is not
always predictable or perceptible to subjects, but is more akin to the way common sense becomes automatically ingrained in daily living. For example, how youth unflinchingly adorn their bodies with trappings of the “proper” gender such as make-up, or display their ethnicity through body art, or the ways specific religious practices become normalized, such as wearing turbans, within specific communities.

Therefore, the concept of identity is not a separate from subjectivity, but instead can be understood in its relation to subjectivity. Identities are the manifestation of subjectivity in the form of representations, categorizations, and affiliations which subjects take up (Weedon, 2004). As Hall (1996) states, “Identities are thus points of temporary attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (p. 5). One’s identity is “where our sense of self is continually (re)constructed among, over, and through various (and variously shifting) subjectivities” (Zingsheim, 2011, p. 25) in underscoring the importance of discursive power relations in conceptualizing the self. The significance of thinking about subjectivities and identities in this way dispels the possibility of an all knowing, rational subject or researcher unencumbered by power relations, and highlights the fluidity of identity attachments through various discourse and contexts. The convergences, slippages, and disruptions in subjection employed in performing “Sikh” through how youth theorize multicultural discourses, and how multicultural discourses frame racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identities of the self and “others” is particularly important throughout this study.

An example of how discursive practice allow for certain types of knowledge about students to be normalized in school settings can be discerned through distinctions between “regular” and “modified” students. Students are placed under surveillance through techniques such as reporting on grades, behavioral reports, and teacher supervision. Surveillance, regulations and reporting might provide opportunities for some students to achieve high standards according to letter grade criteria, scholarships, accolades from teachers for “appropriate” behaviors, and thus deemed “regular”. Students who stray too far from the normative expectation of scholarly or behavioral standards are potentially labelled “modified” or “adapted”. These students may then be subjected to regulation through additional reporting, school based meetings, special classrooms, parental involvement, the gaze of teacher’s assistants, and
increased monitoring by counselors and administrators. These discursive practices reinforce notions of “truth” about “regular” and “irregular” students, and show how the effects of power work through multiple circuits to influence identities. There is no truth to what a regular or modified student is, only the discourses and practices used to define boundaries which serve to label students as such.

**Performing Sikh**

In analyzing the constitution of Sikh youth identities, Judith Butler’s (1990; 1993; 2004) theorizing on performativity provides conceptual tools which incorporate “complex interactions between the subject, the body, and identity” (Lei, 2003, p. 160). Although early theorizing on performativity was gender and sex specific, what is crucial to all social identity categories is that subjects do not precede the discourses which constitute their identities, but rather are made intelligible through the acts which are said to be evidence of an identity. In other words, categories such as “gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (Butler, 1990, p. 25), and is made culturally intelligible through repetition of discourses which precede subjects and produce bodies as effects of discourse. Thus normative understanding of male/female gender performances can only make sense, or become culturally intelligible, as citations of previous norms which are legitimized through “the corporeal stylization of gender” (Butler, 1993, p. 135). The active approach to understanding gender (or any identity category) as “a kind of becoming or activity” (Butler, 1990, p. 112) rather than a finalized accomplishment, troubles the “truth” of sex and gender categories and looks to the regulatory “taboos, prohibitions, threats of punishment” (Butler, 1993, p. 21) which work to both “animate and constrain” (Butler, 1993, p. 22) how subjects perform gender. Crucial to Butler’s theory is sex/gender ideals are “finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody” (Butler, 1990, p. 141) even as subjects and others assert the realness of their identities. Yet what about issues of race, ethnicity and religion? Can these categories be explored through performativity theory in understanding Sikh youth lives? If gendered acts are ”the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time” (Butler, 1990, p. 33), might other categories such as race, ethnicity, and religion be analyzed in conjunction with gender in producing the illusion of a stable subject?
While Butler’s initial theorizing of performativity (Butler, 1990) was purposefully aimed at deconstructing normative structures of sex and gender, she does address the absence of race in her own theorizing in subsequent works. In *Bodies That Matter* (Butler, 1993), Butler sees possibilities in multiple “regimes of regulatory production” (p. 17) including race, as effecting the very materiality of bodies. As with sex and gender, the “reiterated practice of racializing interpellations” (Butler, 1993, p. 18) might be worked in an effort towards understanding ethno-racial identities as “an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation” (1990, p. 173) of subjects. The “illusion” does not erase that bodies exist, or material consequences to categorization, but rely on the social discourses which always accompany the scene of recognition. In an interview with Vikki Bell (1999), Butler further states that “thinking race and gender non-sequentially, in terms of how one may operate as the un-marked background of the other” (p. 157) makes pursuing other contingencies such as ethnicity and religion relevant (Bell, 1999; Lei, 2003; Youdell, 2006; Aly, 2015). For example, when Simran and Jasmine use categories such as “brown boys” to describe males at school, they might be thinking race (brown skin), ethnicity (brown is often used by participants to describe people of Punjabi descent and cultural background), and religion (brown is sometimes used to mean Sikh) through the obviously gendered term “boys” in coming to “know” or recognize these categories. Therefore, I argue performativity is a useful concept to explore how participants move between the contingencies of discursive categories in different contexts and situations where categories require each other for specific types of recognition to take place.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that gender or sex simply be substituted with race, ethnicity, or religion. That would be counter to Butler’s thinking that categories cannot exist outside of their discursive mobilization. The histories, bodies, and contextual development of these discourses differ and do not offer a blueprint for easy exchange. Nor is there desire on my part to flippantly replace concepts with each other as I acknowledge any stable referent to sex/gender or race/ethnicity/religion are fictions which are mutually constitutive of each other. My argument starts with how the utility of Butler’s theory of performativity might be put to use in analyzing the ways discourses about ethno-racial subjects such as Sikh youth, are: a.) always gendered, and b.) the precursor to performative acts which “bring into being or
enacts that which it names” (Butler, 1993, p. 134.). In this dissertation there is an acknowledgment that only for analytic purposes would gender, ethnicity, race, and religion be focussed on because if gender and ethno-racial discourses always “operate as the un-marked background of the other” (Butler in Bell, 1999, p. 157), separation is impossible from the onset.

In theorizing the identification process through performativity, there must be serious consideration given to the various cultural fields subjects find themselves in. In this way, analyzing specific contexts in which Sikh youth identities are constituted may open insights into the contingencies of racial discourses (phenotype), ethnic discourses, gender, and religious discourses that might be relevant in a given space. Performativity makes contingency important as “even when one identity is, or has, primacy in a pedagogical or curricular moment, there is a knowledge that more complicated and fluid constructions are produced around us” (Loutzenheiser, 2005, p. 36). For example, when female Sikh students speak about teachers coming to know their bodies as silently suffering some form of cultural oppression, or male Sikhs discuss various consequences of “hanging out” in large groups in school, gender and the racialization of Sikh bodies are inseparable components in the specific context of school. Similarly, when baptized Sikh girls challenge norms associated with beauty and sensuality by speaking with pride about wearing turbans, *kirpan*, and not removing body hair the disruption of gender norms are accompanied by religious discourses which play out through the materiality of their body in society.10

These different representations of being Sikh are the bodily manifestation of discourses which influence how subjects understand who they are through changing contexts. Sikh youth might alter their turbans and hair to play school sports, remove articles of faith when entering certain public spaces such as airports, or reiterate certain bodily actions through prayers in temples. “In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that

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9 Ceremonial blade worn by baptized Sikhs.
10 Baptist Sikhs wear five religious symbols which start with the letter “K” equivalent in English. *Kes* (keeping in cut hair), *Kirpan* (steel blade worn across the body in sheath), *Kara* (steel wrist band), *Keshara* (specific style of undergarment), and *Kunga* (a small comb used for grooming and tucked into hair). Also knows as the 5 Ks.
subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of
organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc.” (Foucault, 1980, p. 97) across various contexts. The subject across various cultural fields is “the grounds of the permanent possibility of a
certain re-signifying process, one which gets detoured and stalled through other mechanisms of power,
but which is power’s own possibility of being reworked” (Butler, 1995, p. 47). Therefore, prevailing discourses in multiple cultural milieus have implications for how Sikh identities are materially affected and propel the process of becoming Sikh.

**Multicultural Performativity**

The literature on multicultural theory is a wide and diversified field which can take any number of analytic paths in research (Benet-Martinez & Hong, 2015). Most commonly, multiculturalism and multicultural theory tends to look at top-down policy, advocacy, and social justice initiatives which share root concerns with race, ethnicity, religion, and language as key markers of identity and inequality in culturally diverse societies (Wise & Velayutham, 2010; Banks & McGee, 2016). Increasingly, theorists have focussed on issues of gender and sexuality (Okin, 1998, Anthias, 2002; Sadker & Zittleman 2016; Mayo, 2016) and how these categories might be understood differently through a multicultural lens. I seek to extend the inquiry into gender and multicultural theory by utilizing performativity theory alongside multicultural theory as a lens to investigate the constitution of Canadian Sikh youth identities. However, my specific use of multicultural theory is geared towards an analysis of multicultural discourses which inform, reiterate, and re-signify the way identities emerge through everyday practices11.

**Performing Everyday Multiculturalism**

In this study, I advocate for what various theorists conceptualize as “everyday multiculturalism” (Columbo, 2010; Harris, 2009; Wise & Velayutham, 2010) to be read through performativity theory. A “key to the everyday multiculturalism approach is to understand how these wider structures and

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11 Although I do address various typologies regarding Canadian multicultural theory such as conservative multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism in chapter 3, the focus of the present study is on multicultural discourses which might be significant to the identification process for youth.
discourses filter through to the realm of everyday practice, exchange and meaning making, and vice versa” (ibid, p. 3). As addressed above, performativity theory assists in addressing how discursive categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and religion converge to constitute subjectivities and identities. Furthermore, everyday multiculturalism and performativity theory are both concerned with how subjects recognize, “experience and negotiate cultural difference on the ground and how their social relations and identities are shaped and re-shaped in the process” (p. 3)\textsuperscript{12}. In the same way that everyday multiculturalism pays heed to the “quotidian” (Wise, 2010) ways through which multicultural differences are negotiated, Butler’s performativity theory accounts for "the mundane ways in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds” (Butler 1997, p. 140) are reiterated through practices in everyday contexts and situations. Both theories, then, offer an opportunity to focus on the emergence of everyday, normative, common sense practices through which ethno-racial diversity in “the micro-territories of the local” (Harris, 2009, p. 200) are recognized and negotiated by subjects as they make sense of the “self” and “others”.

Performativity theory read through everyday multiculturalism also allows for multiple discourses about multiculturalism to be interpreted in their ability to effect subjectivities and identities in culturally pluralistic societies. For example, multiculturalism might be taken up as national policy, a part of globalization, the push for assimilation, accommodation, tolerance, or an anti-racist model (Henry, 2012; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Theorizing the ways discourses regulate knowledge construction shows “there are only finite numbers of discourses in circulation at any given time; hence they are competing for meaning” (Eveline & Bacchi, 2010, p. 150). The tensions between various multicultural discourse and their material effects indicates how “intercultural engagements are never neutral, are underpinned by asymmetrical power relations” (Butcher & Harris, 2010, p. 452), and might also be inflected by gender, ethnicity, race, and religion. The interactions between discourses of multiculturalism and youth bodies might be discerned through how schools address students who wish to wear turbans during athletic

\textsuperscript{12} Difference might manifest in a desire for recognition, negotiating and establishing boundaries of belonging, securing rights, or cultural survival.
events, or *kirpans* on school busses, or pray during school hours. Thus, “how individuals routinely negotiate across cultural difference in everyday encounters” (Ho, 2011, p. 604) allows for thinking about the discourses which frame others within everyday multiculturalism.

Everyday multiculturalism’s focus on “recognition or acknowledgement of otherness in situational specificity” (Wise, 2009, p. 35) relates to context. For example, community education (Shan & Walter, 2015), the marketplace (Watson, 2009), suburban neighbourhood interactions (Watson & Saha, 2012), and sports (Knijnik & Spaaij, 2017) are rife with examples of the effects of multicultural discourses in shaping of youth subjectivities and identities. The ways youth negotiate identities within these contexts allows for the conceptualization of agency beyond a sovereign subject, but informed through the discourses which both constitute and regulate subjects. Subjects do not simply adopt dominant multicultural discourse in unidimensional versions of power, but are constantly re-signifying, negotiating, and performing acts of rupture within the context of everyday multicultural living. Therefore, performativity theory read alongside everyday multiculturalism can attend to the specificity of living in the Lower Mainland, how this specificity relates to the way multicultural discourses evolve, and repercussions for the ways Sikh youth might identify and recognize others within the multicultural imaginary.

**The Lower Mainland and the Sikh Diaspora**

In conducting this study in the Lower Mainland, identifying which specific South Asian community is being researched is important. Through an examination of the literature on South Asian youth, I found a dichotomy between overly generalized terms such as South Asian, Indo-Canadian, East Indian or “brown” (Prashad, 2000; Hirji, 2010; Sayani, 2013), versus more specific terms such as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Punjabi (Jodkha, 2009; Ahluwalia & Pellettiere, 2010). Adding to the complexity is that even the participants in this study do not just use one categorical identification, but use multiple terms to describe themselves including Sikh, Punjabi, Indo-Canadian, brown and East Indian. Within this study, most of the participants use the terms Punjabi and Sikh interchangeably as most Punjabis in the Lower Mainland are adherents to the Sikh faith (Statistic Canada, 2011). However, as will be shown throughout
the dissertation, there are also times when youth use these terms in specific ways for specific reasons to identify themselves. This is significant because it evidences the importance of specific discourses in influencing how subjects choose to identify, under what circumstance, and which context. The eventuality of choosing to make this study about Sikh youth was not to advocate for any one way of identifying. The theoretical framework of the dissertation acknowledges that all terms of identification are contested and open to various definitions and practices. The purpose of using Sikh as the primary signifier was to engage in conversations about how being Sikh might be performed through multiple labels, affiliations, and practices.

The majority of “South Asians” in the Lower Mainland trace their ancestry to the Indian state of Punjab, and identify as Sikhs by religion (Nayar, 2012; Todd, 2013). Sikhs have also made a significant impact on the cultural landscape of the Lower Mainland in a way that is unique to other South Asian communities (Sumartojo, 2012). As is evidenced by the construction of dozens of temples, to the Punjabi markets of Vancouver, Surrey, and Abbotsford, to the private Sikh Khalsa Schools, it is hard not to notice the contribution of the Sikhs. British Columbia, and specifically the Greater Vancouver area, also holds an important place in the historical evolution of the Sikh diaspora. From the onset of the earliest Sikh immigration to North America in the late 19th century to the present, the Lower Mainland of Vancouver has provided the grounds for one of the largest Sikh populations outside of India (Todd, 2013). Historical antagonisms such as head taxes, deportations, exclusion, and modern discourses of religious fundamentalism and liberal multicultural tolerance have combined to alter and influence how Sikhs are understood in this specific location (Kazimi, 2012). Although there is no universal Sikh experience in the Lower Mainland, the participants in this study indicate they are influenced by the unique set of circumstances of location in thinking through their own identities. Some of these factors will be examined in the following chapters.

The Sikh communities of the Lower Mainland are also the descendants of the first group of South Asian immigrants to arrive in British Columbia. In addition, the establishment of the first Sikh


gurudwara\textsuperscript{13} and cultural society in North America can be traced to the Lower Mainland. Furthermore, the Lower Mainland has produced the first female turbaned Sikh judge in Canada, Palbinder Kaur Shergill, the first Sikh Defense Minister of Canada, Harjit Sajjan, and the first Sikh premier in Canadian history, Ujjal Dosanjh. These individual achievements are contrasted with the negativity associated with the Komagata Maru incident (Kazimi, 2012), the Air India bombing and trial (Kashmeri & McAndrew, 2005), divisive temple politics, charges of religious fundamentalism, and the current media infatuation with gangsterism in the community (Mall, 2015, McElroy, 2016, Baker, 2017). Overall, these events have not only made headlines in the Lower Mainland, but have gained much attention in the Sikh diaspora where events in the Lower Mainland have influenced Punjabi-Sikh communities across the globe (Verma, 2011). From movies, music videos, song lyrics, and fashion, Punjabi popular culture throughout the diaspora has been influenced by events and circumstances in the Greater Vancouver area. It is within this seemingly contradictory cultural landscape that Sikh youth make sense of their identities.

\textbf{Sikh Youth in the Lower Mainland}

Currently, Sikh males hold a notorious place in the imaginary of the Lower Mainland. At the time of writing this dissertation, there is regular reporting on gang violence, temple conflicts, religious fundamentalism, and school dissatisfaction within this population (Sayani, 2013, McElroy, 2016; Baker, 2017). The concern about Sikh males is not unwarranted. Over a 100 young men have lost their lives under avoidable circumstances related to drug trafficking, revenge plots, and gang affiliations over the last two decades (Sumartojo, 2012; Baker 2017), and there is no denial about the potential dangerous behaviors exhibited by some young men. In recent years individual schools have made special pedagogical interventions targeting Sikh boys such as holding assemblies discussing gang involvement only with this population, and determining the amount of brown males who can gather “safely” within the school property. These school initiatives reiterate discourses about Sikh males as menacing and perpetually at risk of harming themselves and others. However, as the participants in this study discuss,

\textsuperscript{13} Sikh temple.
there are alternative narratives that are too often in the shadows of what the minority are doing in the Sikh community. The participants in this study seem aware of stereotyping of “brown boys” in schools resulting in coping strategies and acts of resistance. In many ways, the participants in this study speak back to negative stereotypes positioning of Sikh males and grow tired of the association, while also thinking through the reasons for various dangerous behaviors. The present work attempts to add complexity to the limited ways that these young men are known, how they self-identify, and how they make sense of their identities in the Lower Mainland.

If Sikh males are becoming increasingly notorious, Sikh females might be increasingly marginalized as a result of their absence in educational research and public discourses. In reviewing the literature, it became clear that little is known about girls who identify as Sikh in British Columbia because of the lack of educational research conducted into their lives. Does the paucity of literature on Sikh girls specifically have to do with a hyper-focus on the negative portrayals of Sikh boys? Is it because of a perceived “crisis in masculinity” and a desire to save the boys (Griffin, 2000)? Or is it because brown women in particular are sometimes dismissed as simple accessories to the lives of men and concerns of Western feminists? (Mishra, 2013). This dissertation advocates for Sikh girls to share their experiences and observations about their lives in schools and society, how they feel about self-identifying as Sikh, and how they perform their identities. The voices of Sikh girls are not just important in relation to boys, but are important in and of themselves as subjects produced within discourses and their material effects.

**Contextualizing the Study: Further Conversations within Critical Literature**

This project is broadly situated within literature in the sociology of education concerned with “the relationship between schooling and societal inequities in the production of identities, and a moral commitment to correcting those inequities” (Groenke, 2009, p. 3). Often termed social justice, multicultural, or anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2015), interrelated inequities such as racism, homophobia, sexism, and colonialism highlights how “institutional inequities and historical power imbalances” (Kelly, 2012, p. 136) continue to manifest in present conditions within education. Particularly relevant for this dissertation is literature on how knowledge production about racialized
identities is reiterated and resisted within schools. The “contingent and discursive nature of all identities” (Randall, 2010, p. 116) and the practices which sustain meaning making are the focal point of the literature review. Therefore, the purpose of the literature review is twofold: first I focus on how racialized identities are understood to be constituted and resisted within education literature, and second, relevant literature about Sikh youth and education are brought into this conversation.

The literature on how youth identities are constituted and resisted within school settings is robust. Most of the literature might be considered as falling within a generalized category of “critical” theory, informed by left or progressive politics, which seeks different paths in understanding how, and why youth resistance occurs in attempting to make schools more equitable (Gillborn, Rollock & Ball, 2012). These critical interventions, including neo-Marxism, critical pedagogy, critical race and gender theory focus on attempts to make schools more inclusive of diverse learners through critiquing the ways unequal power relations are perpetuated (McGrew, 2011). Structural inequalities, such as class, gender, race, and sexuality, which are embedded and replicated within education, are exposed to make schools emancipatory and potentially transformative for marginalized youth (for example, Friere, 1970; Willis, 1977; Giroux, 2003; Apple, 2011).

Critiques of the emancipatory focus of critical pedagogy exemplified by Lather (1991) and Ellsworth (1992) take seriously the potential of addressing the negotiated tensions within knowledge construction. Within these critiques of educational research is a focus on the ways social relations are intertwined with discursive relations of power, and are influential in understandings how knowledge production about racialized youth is constituted, reiterated, and resisted in schools. No longer are schools considered either places of pure structural determinacy for specific identities or venues of pure resistance on part of students (Britzman, 2003). This false binary is supplanted by the nuances of multiple power relations in producing “competing ways of giving meaning to and constructing subjectivity” (Jackson, 2001, p. 386), and discursive agency (Butler, 1997; 2004) which “exists alongside fragile resistances” (Youdell, 2011, p. 142). Schools are viewed as spaces where power in the form of normative knowledges and practices circulate in constituting youth identities, but can misfire, produce new meanings and
identity possibilities (Ellsworth, 2005; Youdell & Armstrong, 2011). The significance of this approach fits with the theoretical framework of the dissertation in that emancipation from power is abandoned in order articulate the constant back and forth negotiations with power in multiple contexts which influence patterns of living.

**Youth of Color in the Literature**

In relation to youth of color in schools, various poststructural theories have been utilized in analyzing the circulation of power in constructing racialized identities. Three interrelated themes emerge in this literature: first, identity constructs such as gender and race are never capable of being isolated from other discourses; second, whiteness is a critically important discursive construct which impacts youth of color theorizing their own identities; and third, youth adopt various acts of resistance, or discursive agency, as “subjects constituted in relations of power also have the potential to act with intent and resist these power relations” (Butler 2004, as cited in Youdell, 2011, p. 142). In relation to this study, these aforementioned themes are important as being Sikh infers differing positionalities, experiences, constraints, and possibilities. Therefore, the literature presented in this section focuses on studies which discuss race in relation to other discursive constructs such as gender, ethnicity, whiteness, and resistance which affect subjectivities for youth of color.

For example, Youdell (2003) explores how African-Caribbean student identities are intertwined with gendered and racial discourse about what it means to be undesirable students. Youdell argues that racialization of these youth frames how acts of resistance are articulated, policed and understood depending on gender designations. African Caribbean boys’ practices, bodies, and behaviors are viewed as “anti-school”, whereas “Caribbean girls' resistances were seen to be located within an accommodation of schooling” (Youdell, 2003, p.). Significant are the ways gendered/raced bodies and their actions are read differently by school leaders due to the expectations and placed on the dichotomy between boy behaviors and girl behaviors. Similarly, Youdell’s (2011) study of the constitution of Polynesian student identities during Multicultural Day events reveals the possible multiple consequences and positionalities afforded boys and girls in regards to race, ethnicity, gender, and resistance. Through a dance performance
at a school sanctioned event, resistance read through Polynesian boys’ bodily practices are the central focus of affairs, while girls acts of resistance are marginalized and in danger of being “ignored, erased” (Youdell, 2011, p. 150). Nayak and Kehily (2008) approach the discursive practices which uphold normative gender, race, class, and sexualities in youth cultures in globalized societies. Nayak and Kehily (2008) show how boys and girls do not just negotiate their identities in singular contexts. Instead, schools, media, globalized spaces, and local cultures overlap in reproducing dominant tropes and possibilities for renewal. A “complex melange in which gender and race signs are still subject to place and geographical context” (Kehily & Nayak, 2008, p. 334) reveals the importance of the many tensions involved in the constitution of youth identities for boys and girls. These tensions are important because they show how youth come to a sense of self through multiple relations and context and no single identity signifier can encapsulate who they are.

Challenges posed to normative discursive practices which uphold whiteness as the default norm for all student identities are important in the research on youth of color. This is because the dominance of whiteness within education, and in European settler societies in general, is a major theme youth of color refer to in explicating their school experiences (Leonardo, 2009). In the words of Leonardo (2011), “subjects do not merely describe the world of race, but actively perform and constitute it through discourse” (p. 677). In this vein, Lei’s (2003) work on black girls and Asian boys in high school settings is informed by how these youth reiterate and contest their identities in relation to whiteness. Whiteness is understood as multiple discursive practice which “perpetuates the positioning of people of color as the Other, and the white, European American cultures as the mainstream and the norm” (Lei, 2003, p. 158). Lei (2003) asserts that identity possibilities in schools for African American girls and Asian boys “were constructed both for them and by them” and that students “responded with strategic acts, resistance, conformity, and disruption to the regulatory systems” (p. 159) of whiteness circulating in schools. Friedel, (2010) also comments on the importance of whiteness in relation to school experiences of Indigenous youth. In an “examination of the practices of whiteness and ongoing colonialism in producing a racial hierarchy” (Friedel, 2010, p. 41-42), Friedel’s ethnography with Indigenous youth in a Canadian school
points to the ways stigmatization through being deemed as culturally inferior remains an important part of identity in the making for these students. Looking “Native” and passing as white have different implications for how Friedel’s participants understand their identities in schools and the larger community as passing as white has more social capital. Being Native is tied to “depravity” (Friedel, 2010, p. 23) which has a negative effect on developing a sense of belonging in society for Indigenous youth and informs resistance strategies. Ball’s (2012) study on childhood education, Indigenous youth, and identity speaks to “dissonant learning environments” (p. 286) which do not coincide with early learning experiences within their communities. This disconnect has negative consequences for Indigenous identities as inadequate learners. Ball discusses Indigenous youth in four main categories: First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and urban Aboriginal in order break the myths of essentialization within the population and advocating for early learning opportunities which foster a positive identity. Barker, Goodman & DeBeck (2017) take up the dire circumstances of suicide among Indigenous youth. In their study about Western prevention strategies and Indigenous ways of knowing, the authors advocate for a “culture as treatment” (p. 208) approach in an attempt to reduce the number of suicides of Indigenous youth in Canada. In addition, Gordon and Zinga (2012) speak to how the negotiation of whiteness also happens in places conceptualized as spaces for youth of color. An investigation into “black-focussed school in Toronto” (Gordon & Zinga, 2012, p. 1) indicates that even if curriculum, teachers, and students are from different racial backgrounds, whiteness is always present in how young people understand their identities in education. Students in this study speak to the profession of teaching as white, schools as white, and wonder how they fit within this epistemology. These studies are significant as they address the ways whiteness is understood by young people, how institutions are woven through understandings, and how students potentially construct identities around acts of resistance.

**Sikh Youth in the Literature**

As others have noted (Sayani, 2013), the topic of South Asian youth in educational studies is an under researched area of exploration and this study attempts to address the gap in the literature. One reason for this gap is that South Asian groups are often categorized together or not differentiated from
each other, and in other instances synonyms such as Punjabi, South Asian, and East India etc. are used instead of terms such as Sikh. However, from within the published studies certain key themes surface in framing understandings about this population which are particularly useful in this dissertation. Namely, how different identity positionalities are informed by multiple overlapping discourses about gender, religion, race, and ethnicity. Discourses about normative gender expectations and expressions are used in analyzing Sikh youth school achievement, educational engagement, and youth behaviors and attitudes related to identities (Heer, 2015). In addition, the literature underscores how South Asian youth are relationally aware of living in a dominant white culture alongside differentiating from others in their own cultural communities. Finally, much of the literature situates youth identity formation within “culture clash” discourses about young Sikhs being torn between incommensurable Eastern and Western cultures precipitating conflicts in identification and school achievement. Sikh youth are variously positioned within debates about accommodation as minorities within Western nations, or resistant to change as a result of being immersed too deeply in their own culture. It is to this literature that I now turn.

**Accommodation and Culture Clash**

Gibson’s (1988) often cited study of American Sikhs in a California high school documents both struggles and successes for young Sikhs. Struggles with racism and discrimination are contrasted with strategic acts of accommodation of Western values which allow Sikh boys and girls to succeed in education more than black and Latino students (Gibson, 1988, p. 35). Gibson discusses gender differences in educational expectations and desires, and how an attitude of accommodation without assimilation is embraced within the Sikh community. In this study accommodation is viewed as positive in regards to economic success and educational attainment without fully foreclosing links to a Punjabi identity. Similarly, Gibson and Bhachu’s (1991) study of youth in Britain and California speaks to a “minority work ethic” and how this might explain the success of many Sikh students within schools. This is in line with theories that advance the debated thesis that voluntary minorities’ (those who chose to immigrate to Western nations) educational attainment is greater than forced minorities (victims of colonialism or
displaced by slavery), and on par with Anglo-students because voluntary immigrants eagerly accommodate values of the dominant education system (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Prashad, 2000).

In contrast to the more positive accounts of Sikh youth integration and accommodation in the United States, Hall’s (2002) anthropological account of the Sikh community in the UK addresses problematic issues which arise with any attempts at integration and accommodation. Sikh youth understandings of education, immigration, and cultural politics which influence “what it means to be Sikh, Indian, Asian, and British, in Britain and the diaspora more broadly” (Hall, 2002, p. 2) indicate a more complex process than accommodation theories. In Hall’s research, being “caught between two cultures” influences expectations and consequences for 1st and 2nd generation boys and girls. In regards to the education system, intra-group family dynamics, government policies, citizenship, and gender differences in experiences of marginalization are both distinct and overlap. Similarly, Nayar’s (2004) study looks at the experiences of three generations of Sikhs including school aged youth in Vancouver. The research is framed by discourses about cultural conflict between Punjabi-Sikh communities and the larger white society they live in. Nayar investigates reasons for practices of cultural isolationism and resistance to dominant societal values, and why boys and girls engage with either change, or continuation of cultural practices within multicultural societies. The author also details the social and political circumstance which have made the Sikh community so visible in the Lower Mainland. For example, in a subsequent study, Nayar (2008) argues Sikhs in Vancouver are associated with religious fundamentalism, “a term frequently used in academic and journalist circles over the last several decades” (Nayar, 2008, p. 17), which portrays this groups as belonging to a culture which cannot be assimilated. However, the author comments that political activism engaged in by youth about injustices in India committed against Sikhs is misinterpreted as radical orthodoxy in Western media. Nayar troubles the binary of the culture clash paradigm, Canadian born Sikhs might be passionate about politics in India, think of themselves as Canadian, and have liberal political leanings in regards to local politics.

The pervasiveness of culture clash discourses is further explored and troubled in Handa’s (2003) research of girls of South Asian descent in multicultural Canada. Handa relies on interviews with young
women in order to ascertain the reasons for competing desires of cultural preservation and embracing aspects of a “Canadian” (white) identity. Importantly, and in alignment with this dissertation, the young women interviewed for the study indicate fluidity in how they self-identify, yet the participants feel the pressures of gender conformity to either act like “brown” or “white” girls. Gender expectations are also a common theme in Durham’s (2004) interview study with teenaged South Asian girls. Participants in this study are viewed “as girls in-between, or girls embarking on the project of forging new ethnicities” (Durham, 2004, p. 157) as subjects actively critique dominant discursive tropes about their bodies; namely the chaste/demure/docile Indian girl versus the hypersexualized Western female. Durham looks at East/West cultural tensions produced through global media and how young girls in the South Asian diaspora challenge the limitations placed on their bodies through new discursive practices.

The studies above share the importance of gender, race, ethnicity, and religious constructs within culture clash discourses with different consequences for males and females. Hirji (2011) reiterates this point by indicating that young girls are overly burdened with the responsibility of the preservation of cultural values and ideals more so than boys. Hirji’s study analyzing young girls responses to gender expectations in Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa takes up how girls “must satisfy their parents, relatives and partners while also obtaining the visible signs of a successful Western existence” (Hirji, 2011, p. 160). Intra-group negotiations made alongside living within a dominant culture forms an important part of how these girls identify. The subjects of this study participate in acts of resistance in pushing boundaries of what brown girls are assumed to be and should behave like. To this end, Ludhra and Chappell (2011) also theorize pushing identity boundaries and make clear the importance of studying the vast array of differences within South Asian communities. As a result of these difference “the experiences of South-Asian girls are hugely complex and individual” (Ludhra & Chappell, 2011, p. 104) and do not always “operate within a 'culture crisis' or 'culture conflict' model” (Ludhra & Chappell, 2011, p. 104). The authors surmise that participants do not operate outside of discursive power relations, but contextually draw on different discourses in identifying as modern South Asian girls in places such schools.
The data within this dissertation resonates with the literature on Sikh youth in general in terms of the pervasiveness of whiteness as a frame of reference subjects constantly engage with in thinking about themselves. In studying Sikh students in a multicultural American high school, Shankar (2008) delves into how whiteness is mimicked, reproduced, and re-inscribed by paying attention to linguistic and behavioral styles used by boys. Gender consequences of acting too white, or acting like hyper-masculine FOBs\textsuperscript{14} are front and center of the analysis where negotiations of identities evidence “understanding how FOB styles become racially coded” (Shankar, 2008, p. 279). Also, how schools are implicated in accommodating “model minority” immigrants who quickly assimilate versus alienation of FOBs is discussed alongside intra-group sense making of identities. Sundar (2008) reiterates the complexity of identities by sharing how Sikh youth intentionally “brown it up or bring down the brown” (Sundar, 2008, p. 251) strategically depending on context and who they are with. Sundar argues that these types of negotiation are acts of resistance and resilience by Sikh youth in order to face “challenges in constructing identities that simultaneously admit and resist elements of both their parents’ and mainstream (white) cultures” (Sundar, 2008, p. 253). Resistance to whiteness through hyper-masculine practices of Sikh boys in Surrey, BC, is a topic in Frost’s (2010) research. “Brown” as an alternative way of “doing male” not only contests a white hegemonic masculinity but confronts versions of Punjabi masculinity embodied by their fathers as well as the media’s representation of the typical Indo-Canadian man” (Frost, 2010, p. 213). Boys’ narratives in Frost’s study relay the negative effects of racialization on young men and their resistances to being characterized as brown gangsters. In line with this dissertation, Frost takes seriously the notion that identities are formed “within and between cultures” (Frost, 2010, p. 229) as Sikh boys engage in practices which attempt to displace the hegemony of white masculinities in schools. These practices are also important within intra-cultural context where the fluidity of identifying as brown boys is influenced by discourses relevant within the Sikh communities.

\textsuperscript{14}Fresh off the boat. This term is often used in chastising members of immigrant groups who act, speak or behave in a manner associated with their country of origin, instead of adopting the norms of their new surroundings.
Contending with stereotypes from a media landscape rife with accounts of violence in the Vancouver Sikh community effect the youth in Sumartojo’s (2012) study of Indo-Canadian youth. How young men contend with negative effects of racialization in schools demonstrates the “struggle, conflict and negotiation over the characteristics and meanings of a particular ethnic group” (Sumartojo, 2012, p. 23). Both girls and boys express frustration about gender stereotypes and also move the conversation beyond East/West binaries toward a fluidity of identification. How frustrations with stereotypes leads to disaffection for brown boys in schools is also discussed in Sayani’s (2013) ethnography. Sayani cites pathologizing practices within schools and also speaks to the complicities of brown boys themselves in contributing to their own disaffection. In the study, the majority of South Asian students are aware of connotations of being brown students in a public school in the Lower Mainland and express their desire to separate themselves from “the brown crew”15. Sayani’s account shows how South Asian students resist and also repeat negative discourses which constitute their subjectivities and identities. The debate itself is racialized as discourses of victimhood are more associated with white middle class boys, while racialized boys are pathologized as coming from deficit cultures and/or having deficit biological traits (Said, 1979; Giroux, 1997; Dei, 2007). The implications of these discourses is important for policy and practices because they are premised on the fact that one group of boys needs saving, while the other group of boys cannot be saved because of their deficient cultural essence (Hall, 1996).

Obviously for many Sikh youth, religion is one of the most important aspect of identification. A more detailed description of the significance of religious signifiers in the lives of Sikhs is taken up by Singh (2010). This research on identities and the importance of practices related to abstaining from cutting hair for baptized Sikhs takes into account the opinion of males and females. Hair, as will be discussed in a following chapter, involves important discursive practices and representational strategies for young Sikhs which surface in educational spaces. Issues concerning masculinities, femininities, playing on sports teams, forming friendship groups, and being stereotyped as religious fundamentalist are

15 The “brown crew” are boys who are positioned as deviant, defiant, and lacking motivation to perform academically schools.
related to hair and wearing turbans. Hair is also “gendered” in that its significance matters according to types of bodies, and styles worn by youth (Gohil & Sidhu, 2008). The embodiment of turbans and kirpans often associated with masculinities is analyzed in Jakobsh’s (2015) study of the femininities within baptized Sikh communities. The study is an interrogation of gender hierarchies within the Sikh faith as Jakobsh’s work focuses on how young girls use these traditionally masculine signifiers and disrupt gender tidy gender binaries. This study is important in showing how normative feminine representations are challenged by baptized Sikh girls and how novel ways of performing femininities evolve in multicultural context.

Significance and Concluding Remarks

This dissertation attends to the ongoing conversation about youth of color and the ways their subjectivities and identities are constituted in culturally diverse societies and institutions. I pay particular attention to the productive and restrictive discursive practices utilized by youth in becoming-Sikh subjects through multicultural discourse. It will be argued that multicultural discourses are a normative frame of reference which enables certain ways of being Sikh and also constitutes the way participants recognize various “others”. The process of subjection is wrought with tensions, negotiations, and surveillance which all subjects are produced within. However, the focus of this dissertation is to examine how Sikh youth identities in the Lower Mainland are partially “made” through their understandings of multiculturalism. How these discourses effect Sikh youth through everyday encounters and how youth resist and reproduce normative ways of being Sikh will be explicated in the following pages.

A significant aspect of this study is to grapple with the relationship Sikh boys and girls have with the education system. Therefore, the dissertation offers teachers, administrators, and district employees an alternative perspective on Sikh youth that attempts to mitigate the essentialization which often results in the negative effects of racialization. As many studies on South Asian students focusses on either boys or girls, this study synthesizes the voices of girls and boys speaking on a variety of topics related to their lives and how they perceive the world in which they live. Hopefully a more complicated understanding of the multiple factors which contribute to the theorizing of identities promotes a more nuanced
understanding of Sikhs beyond knowing theses students as products of culture clash, docile females, and aggressive boys. New learning and understandings promoted by reflexively engaging with prior understandings of Sikh youth specifically, and racialized students more generally are desired.

In the corpus of youth studies, gender research is quite common. However, young Sikhs are on the margins of literature on minority youth and gender. I argue that the discursive practices which inform young Sikh identities provides an avenue of investigation into how race, religion, ethnicity, and gender are intertwined with each other. In a post 9-11 context, living as multicultural subjects who might also be positioned outside the boundaries of Western socio-religious norms makes displaying religious symbols a tenuous part of identifying as Sikh (Gohil & Sidhu, 2008). Understanding the contextual significance of religious signifiers in how Sikh youth conceptualize their lived experiences offers an opportunity to test the limits of normative multiculturalism and attempt to think through re-signifying practices.

A significant aspect of this study is to analyze how whiteness, racialization, and intra-group differences within the Sikh community operates to frame multicultural recognition. Required are strategies to incorporate the importance of living within the dominance of whiteness, and also in relation to other bodies of color. This is not an either or proposition and means utilizing theories which advocate interrogating the unequal power relations dictated by whiteness and issues of inequity, discrimination, and marginalization surfacing within communities of color in constituting youth identities. In other words, an analysis of power relations related to accents, skin color, religious affiliations, and regions of immigration in multicultural societies might manifest in different ways within particular communities, and in relation to dominant society. Therefore, a more robust use of social justice theories can and should be extended to shed light on issues including and beyond whiteness because they matter to youth.

Setting the Stage

In order to address the theoretical concerns addressed above, this dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In chapter two, Researching Methodologies and Practices, a discussion of the theories and strategies involved in shaping and conducting the study will be offered. Data and theory are interrogated for the ways meaning is constructed in qualitative research through various obstacles,
challenges, and tensions involved in the research process. Chapter three, *The Multicultural Imaginary*, addresses how Canadian Sikh youth come to know multiculturalism through various competing discourses. Here, a brief history of multiculturalism in a Canadian context will be given as it pertains to participants’ subjection in the multicultural present. Chapters four and five analyze how participants identify the self and others as they negotiate discourse of difference in the multicultural imaginary. In chapter four, *Multicultural Frames of Recognition*, I introduce frames of recognition (Butler, 2009) as a concept and then analyze inter-group differences between Sikh participants and “whiteness”, and inter-group differences between Sikh participants and other racialized youth as important lenses through which identities are recognized. The pervasiveness of whiteness is not only interrogated for its discursive authority, but also its impact on multicultural racial hierarchies will also be investigated. In chapter five, *Intra-group Multicultural Frames of Recognition*, the analysis moves to discursive differences within Sikh communities which contingently emerge as important for the recognition of self and others. The constitution of “others within” one’s self-identified communities are discussed through religious discourse which produce and regulate baptized and non-baptized\(^{16}\) Sikh identities. In chapter six, *Schooling Multiculturalism*, inter and intra-group frames of recognition will be discussed in conjunction through specific school based examples regarding multicultural interactions and spectacles. Finally, I conclude with chapter 7 and some remarks about the constitution of identities in a multicultural society, thoughts for further research, and the general applicability of this study for educational studies, youth studies, and multicultural education.

\(^{16}\) Throughout the dissertation I use the terms baptized and orthodox interchangeably to describe youth who not only undergo formal baptismal rites, but also wear visible symbols of Sikhism on their bodies.
CHAPTER 2

Research Methodologies and Practices

In this chapter, the methodological underpinnings for the dissertation will be situated. In doing so, I will extrapolate on important concepts such as qualitative research, the interview method, participants, data, voice, truth, and insider/outsider researcher and how they are put to use within this project. The goal is to attend to the many ways which methodology-theory-analysis are inextricably linked and simultaneously engaged throughout the process of conducting research. By this I mean that methodology is inherently theoretical, and theory has important methodological consequences for every step of research from choosing topics, the call for participants, data analysis, and writing (St. Pierre, 2013). Taking up methodological concerns in this way refutes claims that the research process is the by-product of a neutral observer who simply collects data/facts and produces objective knowledge about a community or groups (Fusco, 2008; Lather, 2009). Instead, I argue that depending on the various ways methodologies and theories are utilized, different types of knowledge are possible, foreclosed, and advocated for within educational research and within this dissertation. Therefore, the research process is not a static vehicle for knowledge production, but the effects of how methodological and theoretical decisions are navigated throughout the research process.

In this chapter, I address the fluidity of the research process, the methodological framework used within, and the main method of gathering data. It is argued that methodologies, methods, and theories employed in research might productively be understood as “apparatuses” which are entangled with, and not separable from knowledge production (Barad, 2003). The concept of an apparatus, identifies any tools of investigation such as qualitative research and the interview method used in this dissertation as being a part of what is knowable, captured, and omitted in research (Barad, 2012). Therefore, any theories and methodologies used in research “are neither neutral probes of the natural world nor structures that deterministically impose some particular outcome” (Barad, 2003, p. 816). Instead, theoretical/methodological concerns become a part of the epistemological, ontological, and ethical aspects of conducting research.
Apparatuses are important because they function to make “cuts”, or difference making incisions, “through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted” (Barad, 2003, p. 816) throughout the research process. Cuts are not a discarding of prior knowledge, influences, perceptions, or an abandoning of past ways of knowing and conducting research, “but rather to cut together-apart (one move)” means a “(re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling” (Barad, 2014, p. 168) which are productive in bringing the past of learning into the present to create new research possibilities. For example, qualitative research is a contested term which can be employed through different theoretical traditions. As a result, terms such as experience and voice, researcher and participant, data and analysis take on different meanings in relation to how knowledge is produced, what knowledge is advocated for, and what knowledge is inevitably excluded.

When conducting research, it is not always the case that methodological and theoretical choices are made at a predefined beginning, carried out in the field, and used through analysis and writing. As will be shown in this chapter, cuts are understood as constantly unfolding throughout the entire research process as methodological, theoretical, practical, and analytical tensions and negotiations arise. This dispels the myth that research is conducted in a linear fashion and instead theorizes the fits and starts, getting stuck, and unfolding of potentialities while conducting research. Therefore, cuts inevitably require moving in different directions and also bring together ways of knowing research differently. For example, are participant experiences and voice taken as truths? Is data confined to statistics or recorded transcriptions? Can researchers be neutral observers? Is data coding necessary in qualitative research? Can one be an insider to the communities being studied? Should researchers change their theoretical commitments while in the field, or during the writing process? Depending on how these questions are addressed, qualitative research as an apparatus of investigation makes different cuts that change the epistemological and ethical commitments of doing research.

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17 I analyze these consequences throughout this chapter.
Using the metaphor of apparatuses and cuts serves as a way of taking up how the researcher, participants, data, and contexts intermingle “in the sense of mattering and meaning” (Barad, 2012, p. 34) within research. In the remainder of the chapter, I will examine several methodological cuts which were influential in the production of knowledge in this dissertation. Each of these cuts are important as they represent moments which bring the past of learning, experience, and theorizing into a space of methodological tension, crisis, and rupture within the research. These cuts matter in that they not only enabled a different type of project to emerge, but also changed me as the researcher in pushing preconceived notions of what I thought my research could, and should be. Put another way, O’Donoghue (2015) surmises: “Participation activates a shift in the one who experiences at the moment of experiencing, with the result that one is made different or becomes other than one was prior to participation” (p. 104). Thus, the cuts discussed throughout this chapter not only changed the project, but also serve as an acknowledgment that “I”, the principal research, was constituted differently through experiencing my own research.

The first cut was opened by engaging the apparatus of qualitative research which held little importance to me in previous research (Heer & Mahoney, 2008). The quantitative methodologies I had been relying on to explain social phenomenon slowly began to be challenged during the dissertation process and began to feel less applicable to the type of research I wanted to conduct. An earlier statistics based project completed for a Master’s degree in education is used to juxtapose the consequences of doing research between quantitative and qualitative (cuts) methodologies. Within this discussion, qualitative research variously understood as “poststructural” will be defined as a further cut through how key concepts are utilized within this study. The second important cut discussed is having a proposed ethnography denied by a particular school district in the Lower Mainland after the district had expressed interest in the work. This changed the main method of data collection for the dissertation from an ethnography to an interview based study. Methodological cuts will be discussed such as how participants would be recruited, conducting individual and small group interviews, and the context of where interviews would take place, through a different strategy for collecting data. These cuts are significant
because they affect how knowledge is constructed, accessed, and presented in subsequent data chapters. The final cut involves a discussion about insider/outsider debates in qualitative research and implications for this dissertation. Researchers who self-label, or are constituted by participants as “insiders” have a unique positionality in relation to knowledge constructed. However, I argue this positionality is in constant flux during the research encounter as participants and researcher move between binaries of insider/outsider. Participants and researchers enact their own cuts through discursive practices which at times focus on similarities, and at other times highlight differences. The significance for data collection and analysis are discussed through possibilities and foreclosures of insider/outsider positionalities. These aforementioned cuts reveal the malleable boundaries established and altered during the entire research process which have important consequences for the end product.

**Cut 1: Dis/continuity: Quantitative Beginnings, Qualitative Yearnings**

Research in general, and doctoral research in particular, is filled with various joys and anxieties. Meeting deadlines, sharing partially developed ideas, seeking funding, and negotiating with committee members can all be exhilarating and stress ridden. Yet an understudied area of the doctoral process is encountering theory and methodologies previously unfamiliar and how they affect the doctoral researcher. It is strongly recommended by some committees to stop reading new theory while writing the dissertation for the practical reason of finishing programs of study. However, the lure of learning through experiencing various theoretical literatures “suggests that new worlds are opened to us, and new tendencies and potentialities are actualized when we open ourselves to that which we encounter and pursue with curiosity” (O’Donoghue, 2015, p. 110). The ramifications for research are important in considering the effects of the materiality of deadlines, confusion and contradictions in data analysis, but also the joy of applying methodological concepts through each other in their various potentialities (Lorraine, 2012).

**Quantitative Beginnings**

The study I conducted for a Master’s degree in education involved undertaking a quantitative methodological approach (Heer & Mahoney, 2008). For that study, Sikh youth answered questions
utilising a Likert Scale about self-esteem and ethnic identity. I was trained methodologically to account for terms such as statistical significance, validity, reliability, and voice through the survey method. Putting numbers to social phenomenon was of utmost importance in showing the social significance of chosen categories. In my initial training as a graduate student, one professor remarked “If you can’t put a number on it, it’s not worth writing about.” At the time, I saw this direction as a sound, scientific, methodological approach to examining the social world and a solid foundation upon which to build my Master’s thesis. I did not question the epistemological significance quantitative methodologies were invested in as I believed “facts” were self-evident within the methodology. Entering doctoral studies, I was adamant that one could better understand concepts such as voice, experience, and truth and represent what was important to youth through statistical analysis.

During course work and independent reading as a doctoral student, I became acutely aware of challenges to my statistics based methodological desires by qualitative theories that I had largely ignored up until this moment. A moment I remember occurred during a class discussion in a course on educational policy. I tried to make a point about educational success and quoted a few statistics to back-up my point. My professor listened to me patiently and then challenged me to think through how I understood the units of analysis which were numerically defined, who has the authority to define, and what policy agendas are reinforced through statistical “validity”. Significantly, statistic were interrogated for the underlying epistemological investments, and never just presented as something that needed total abandonment. These types of questions and valuable discussions with peers opened a curiosity which both affected the kind of research I wanted to conduct and theory I desired to think with. At this point I felt the push and pull of new literature, theories, and methodological possibilities which began to have a visceral effect on me. Waking up in the middle of the night thinking about an article, feeling anxieties in lacking understanding, looking at once familiar concepts differently, and walking in the “known” world and questioning how I ever came to “know” it in a particular way were all induced by experiencing different theoretical perspectives. These theories were new apparatuses which made cuts or “dynamic (re)configurings of the
world” (Barad, 2003, p. 816) which began to challenge epistemological and ethical commitments in my own research.

An introduction to various qualitative research paradigms such as Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1997), Black Feminist Thought (Hill-Collins, 1990), Critical Race Methodologies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and Narrative Inquiry (Blumenreich, 2004) challenged the dominance of positivistic perspectives with which I had been familiar (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Reading differently was both distressing because reading new epistemologies felt counter-intuitive (Britzman, 2000), and also inspirational as conceptualizing new research projects became a possibility. At this stage, I felt it was important to try and “give voice” to Sikh youth through their own counter-stories which are foundational in Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-stories as a method of “telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002 p. 26) could help challenge some of the monolithic ways this population was understood. Any theories which had emancipatory relevance aimed at transforming marginalization of Sikh youth and assisting in overcoming racist societal structures resonated with me at this stage (Dillard, 2000; Kincheloe, 2007; Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). I began to feel qualitative research had the most potential in advocating for the polyvocal voices of the Sikh community and would help undo discriminatory influences faced within the education system.

In time, I began to struggle with certain aspects of traditional interpretive qualitative research and its desire to secure the subject, object, results of research, and privilege grouping of similar things in the production of knowledge (St. Pierre, 2013). I understood the political expediency and potential benefits of any marginalized community using broad experiences to advocate for institutional change. However, I was also aware of the differences within Sikh communities and how these differences were always operating to inform different identity positionalities. I also witnessed the diversity of representations and multitude of experiences within my classrooms in regards to Sikh youth. I began reading in different traditions within qualitative inquiry which sought to open identity categories to proliferating epistemological possibilities while continuing to advocate for non-dominant groups (Kumashiro, 2000;
Lather, 2006). As a result, different theoretical and methodological traditions within qualitative research caused further cuts in envisioning the type of research I wanted to conduct, and a serious reconsidering of concepts such as data, truth, voice, and emancipation (Ellsworth, 1989). Yet these cuts were never “leaving behind or turning away from” (Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012 p. 13) some objective past of theorizing to an uncontaminated future. Instead, theoretical cuts establish dis/continuities “that might take you somewhere interesting that you never would have predicted” (p.13) during the research process.

**Poststructural Cuts**

Within contested categories such as qualitative research, there are a vast array of scholars who conduct their studies from different theoretical perspectives (Rajchman, 2000; Wright, 2006; St. Pierre, 2013). Authors such as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that while qualitative research has a long history in the humanities and social sciences, it should not be confused as a singular, transcendent research approach. Butler echoes this sentiment and questions the desire to group scholars who do such diverse work under the same banner by asking:

> Is the effort to colonize and domesticate these theories under the sign of the same, to group them synthetically and masterfully under a single rubric, a simple refusal to grant the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read, and not to read closely? (Butler, 1992, p. 5)

It is the acknowledgment of the “specificity of these positions” which complicates any universal notion of qualitative research.

Through moving in different directions in qualitative inquiry, I opened to what is often described as “poststructural” literature which eagerly takes up difference, multiplicity, the unknowable, and the messiness of methodology (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009). Theorizing in this way means thinking critically about the discursive practices involved at the forefront of the topics chosen for study, data analysis, researcher positionality, and how knowledge is constructed (Butler, 2005). As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is no transcendent self conducting research through collecting the transparently accessible,
always knowable narratives of subjects. Instead, new associations among concepts help to “plug in” (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p.747) to the complexities and contradictions of conducting research.

**Troubling Authentic Experience and Voicing Participants:**

The dissertation relies on understanding social categories as discursively produced, and open to change over time, and through contexts (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993). The discursive subject is made and understood differently in various contexts such as schools, temples, at work, and athletic venues. Social discourses constitute, and are constitutive of subjects, however they do not wholly determine subjectivities and identities. Agency is evident in the slippages, alterations, and partial identifications which have the potential in instigating new definitions and new ways of thinking about how the self is understood in society (St. Pierre, 2000). These understandings and acknowledgments allows for the proliferation of subject coherence and rupturing the subject as a sovereign entity that is able to exist prior to social interaction (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993). A multiplicity of subject positions with various material realities is inevitable in the process of becoming subjects (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2007).

In relation to this study, participants drew on different types of knowledge in how the concept “Sikh” was put to use in daily living. In other words, “we cannot separate discursive practices from their production in/of/as the material. Nor can we fail to take into account the material effects of discursive practices” (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 747). Gendered, racial, ethnic, and religious identities are thus conceived as malleable, in process, and can change through context and history. The affective influences of discourses indicates “identity of such a multiple and contradictory subject…always contingent and precarious” (Mouffé, 1992, p. 372). Thus multiple discourses about Sikh youth lead to contradictory and conflicting subject positions which are open to “suffer a sort of slippage wherein predominant roles and values lose their claims to absolute authority and subsequently can be altered” (Gutterman, 1994, p. 220) within the interview setting. Therefore, methodologies must move beyond what Judith Butler (1997b) terms “stubborn attachments” (p. 60) to notions of authentic experience and voice.
Peekay: I think it was the best, most entertaining, most exciting experience of my life. Maybe that's because I'm very sporty and athletic and Khalsa School has an amazing sports program. I got on very well with many of the teachers and still keep in touch with some of them.

Raree: It's like the most overprotective parents raise the best liars. I brought it up one day when we (other Sikh friends) were at the beach and they were like, yeah! (Turns to co-interviewee, his friend Harry, and wags his index finger inches from his face). No offence, but they said that's why all the Khalsa School kids are screwed up.

Separate interviews about Khalsa School, a private educational institution primarily for Sikh youth, solicited opposing views on reasons for attending, and the effects a religious education has on students. Peekay shares that her experience was very positive and these feelings have lasted into the present. She also cites examples of why her experience was positive that could just as easily be used to discuss any public high school such as an excellent athletics program, and positive relationships with teachers. Yet Raree is skeptical about a Khalsa School education and only comprehends attending the institution through parental coercion. Raree sees Khalsa School students as “screwed up” which is clearly a contradictory position compared to Peekay.

The significance of these quotes for this dissertation is in the act of seeking, recording, transcribing, coding, and analyzing experience and voice many questions emerged which could not be separated from methodological implications. For example, whose experience is “more real” or more accurate? Whose voice can be relied on as truth, and what kinds of research/knowledge are possible as a result? Raree and Peekay exemplify how experience and voice are both suspect, and productive in poststructural approaches to conducting research. The participants’ experience regarding Khalsa School do not qualify as fact, are not representative of a particular population, or understood as objective truth. Nor are participant narratives of experience nullified as unimportant or lacking critical insights.

Poststructural research is concerned with the ways experiences are mined for the traces of discourses which animate, provide logic, or hint at material effects on subjectivities (Scott, 1992) instead of simply “waiting to be captured by language” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32). Methodologically, poststructural
cuts into concepts such as experience and voice are significant throughout the dissertation because there was no singular, unifying Sikh experience that I could rely on to foreground the study. In addition, during subsequent data analysis, universalizing a Sikh youth experience was “rather like undertaking to nail Jell-O to a wall” (Wright, 2000, p. 4). How Sikh youth perceive their identities in regards to important discourses from within their self-identified communities, and from dominant culture “must be understood as dynamic and contrapuntal emerging from tensions across points of cultural reference” (Durham, 2004, p. 141). This is because youth are negotiating discursive practices which are normalized in different contexts simultaneously as they make sense of their identities. Therefore, data analysis on my part was theoretical and also had methodological implications in problematizing concepts such as experience, voice, and truth in qualitative research as participants contradicted, stumbled, censored, wanted to avoid conflict, and continually moved in multiple directions on various topics in giving voice to their lives.

Peekay: So in order to understand the Sikh community here (Lower Mainland), this negative mindset I have about them, I went to a Sikh camp in California. I wanted to see, like do I just need out, because I really don't like anything that goes on here (Lower Mainland).

Not only do the participants differ with each other, they often offer competing renditions of their experiences. During Peekay’s interview about how wonderful her time was at Khalsa School, she also communicates that she has a “negative mindset” about the Sikh community. In the previous quote, Peekay claims that attending Khalsa School in the Lower Mainland “was the best, most entertaining, most exciting experience of my life”. Yet later in the interview when speaking to her experience within the Sikh community she states “I really don’t like anything that goes on here”. How can these two stances be reconciled under the rubric of authentic experience? Which experience would be closer to Peekay’s true feelings about growing up Sikh in the Lower Mainland? Similar statements from other participants are evident in every transcript made during data analysis as they shift from the past, through the present, and into the future versions of themselves.
Cut 2: Contested Eth “No” graphy: Methodological Cuts

In revamping my statistic based study and moving towards qualitative, poststructural research, I became very interested in ethnographic methods and field research (Lather, 2007). The initial proposal for this study was to conduct a yearlong ethnography in a public high school attended by many Sikh youth. As an apparatus, ethnographic methods provide researchers access to participants, rituals, cultures, and normative and non-normative practices within specific contexts. My goals in pursing an ethnography was to gain a sense of Sikh “young people’s practices of self, community and culture as well as their investment in their school and in schooling, and demonstrate how these investments exist alongside incomplete and fragile resistances” (Youdell, 2012, p. 142). I sought and gained approval from the research ethics board at the university level, and then proceeded to contact one of the largest school districts in the province in order to secure school visits and gain access to research participants. At this time, I contacted a principal of Sikh descent in a specific school about conducting research in his school. I was encouraged by the positive attitude of the administrator who shared encouragement for the type of work that I wanted to do and expressed how timely it might be.

Next, I contacted an administrator in charge of granting approval for academic research in the school district. In a telephone conversation, this administrator acknowledged that the school district would be an excellent place for doctoral research given the large population of Sikh students and families in the catchment area. The positive tone of the conversation left me excited about conducting research which might be beneficial to youth, teachers, and administrators in the school district. The administrator cordially requested that I send in a preliminary list of questions for departmental approval and felt that approval would be granted.

Days after submitting the questions, I received a phone call from the district administrator. She expressed her concern about some of the lines of inquiry I wanted to pursue through interviews with youth. Specifically, I was questioned as to why I would ask about difference within the Sikh community. She expressed her trepidation because addressing the possibility of multiple experiences for Sikh youth had the potential to cause “trouble”. I attempted to clarify that attending to differences in lived realities
for any group of youth should not be seen as negative. Instead, trying to make sense of the multiple experiences Sikhs youth are having due to issues such as socio-economic status, gender, and religious practices are worthy pursuits because these identity markers already affect how youth come to understand their place in schools. The administrator expressed caution toward any investigation into difference as being negative and told me she wanted to avoid “conflict”.

This was the first time I was confronted with skepticism about the project, and I wanted to clarify my position more carefully. I again stated that differences are ever present in schools, but should not be understood as wholly negative or positive. I gave examples of how similar research projects had been conducted in schools before and the names of researchers which could also be cited as references to this point. There was no change on the issue as the administrator remained steadfast in her discomfort with the pursuit of any questions about difference in the Sikh community.

The other set of questions verbalized as problematic topics for discussion were about potential differences in how plurality of sexualities might be understood within youth populations. Despite communicating the need for complex conversations around ethnicities and sexualities as important aspects of identity for youth, I was told that these topics would make some youth uncomfortable. I attempted to reassure the administrator by indicating my consent and assent forms state that any questions which make participants uncomfortable do not have to be answered. In addition, there were no questions about any participant’s sexual identifications, but rather how sexualities are represented in curriculum, policies, and friendship networks. I asked about the productive potential in allowing youth to decide if these topics were worthy of speaking to rather than having an administrative body make the decision. The administrator replied she did not really have an answer to the question. To bolster my argument, I cited provincial prescribed learning outcomes which allow for sexualities to be discussed in public educational curriculum. However, the administrator was adamant that she was still uncomfortable with the direction of the study.

I began to feel nervous as no positive response to the research was obtained from the administrator. As I worried the status of the study was in doubt, I relented and stated the department’s
position was respected and clear. Although I personally wanted to challenge the person in charge about their comments, I offered to eliminate any questions which were considered inappropriate in order to maintain cordiality and show my desire to work with the school district. The response was that the district could not approve the study, but the administrator wished me luck in the future. When the telephone conversation ended, I was exasperated and immediately contacted my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser, who called the administrator in order to find a resolution to the dilemma. Unfortunately, my supervisor was unable to convince the district of the value of the proposed research and was told they would not reconsider their position. Shortly thereafter, I received an official letter from the district indicating that at this time they were not interested in my research. I tried in vain to contact the principal who was initially enthusiastic about the project, but my phone calls and emails were not returned.

“Dis”approval and the Construction of Knowledge

I was disappointed and was left with several questions about the refusal of my research proposal. The two main issues cited as problematic were investigating difference within the Sikh population and also any line of inquiry about sexualities. What was it about difference within the Sikh community that caused the administrator discomfort? Why would an exploration of difference, which is always at play in how individuals identify, be considered a precursor for “conflict”? Were discussions about sexualities within research always out of bounds, or were there circumstances where explorations about sexual identities might be permissible? Was there something about bodies of color specifically speaking about sexualities which was unpalatable and troubling to think about in present school climates?

Posing these questions is strictly a speculative exercise as I understand that I will never know the exact reason for disapproval. Yet through various literatures on the importance of power and discursive practices which remain predominant in educational institutions, certain explanations become potentially relevant. For example, in the telephone conversations with the administrator in charge of granting research proposals, I asked if differences within various communities understood as “white” would be as problematic as differences amongst Sikhs. The only response I received was that each proposal for research was considered on its own merits and separate from each other. I was left to speculate what
would have happened if the proposed study was about investigating differences among students from Anglo-European backgrounds? What if the study was about white students’ discursive understandings of gender performances in school settings? What if the study asked white youth their opinions on social class issues in their neighborhoods? These studies would be steeped in notions of difference, but would they have been met with the same caution about difference within the Sikh community? Was it that the context of this school district also happens to be tied to regular reporting on Sikh temple politics and reporting of conflicts between Sikhs in relation to gangs, guns, and religious violence?

In regards to this dissertation, the administrator acted as the sole representative of the school district and an advocate for district policy. In this important role, she may have had competing and conflicting opinions about the study. Perhaps she was simply following policy, or perhaps she was the sole arbiter of what types of research should be conducted. Whether she felt justified in her refusal as protecting youth is of secondary interest to the discourses she relied on in her explanation for the refusal. Understanding conversations about difference as “causing trouble” and “conflict” for Sikh youth is of particular importance. I had hoped this dissertation would act as a counter-narrative in producing alternative accounts of what it means to be a brown body in order to open the category to a multiplicity of new understandings (Ogle & Glass, 2006). Disregarding this point could be considered an example of how whiteness, as a discursive practice, claims to speak for the best interest of communities of color, yet preserves the status quo of essentializing those very groups. Immersed in the aforementioned critique is the issue of the authority of whiteness, in this case to grant research approval, and dictate which types of knowledges are produced about communities of color. If difference within cultural communities is not permissible on the research agenda of the school district, then it becomes difficult to challenge negative stereotypes of South Asian youth in the Lower Mainland (Sayani, 2013). The effect is the maintenance of whiteness as the cultural authority in keeping the status-quo through discourses of equity, protecting youth of color, and compassion (Castagno, 2014). Perhaps if the study attended to the Sikh community in upholding liberal multicultural celebrations, or if my questions resonated with conservative assimilation models of minority groups ‘melting’ together, the study would have been more palatable.
The consternation in regards to the topic of sexualities also has the duel function of silencing youth perceptions on the topic, and upholding normative regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) around the dominance of heteronormativity (Butler, 2004; Kaufman, 2006). Silencing conversations about youth sexualities is also a technique of surveillance as it re-invests in the dominance of heteronormativity and further marginalizes any other possibility of addressing the plurality of sexual identities in schools. If research agendas are policed in this regulatory way, non-dominant discourses remain stifled in effecting change. To varying degrees, the discursive practices which uphold whiteness and heteronormativity within school districts has the ability to generate, impede, or manipulate what knowledge is reiterated and which cultures continue to have the most capital (Yosso, 2006). As research is a political endeavor, it might be that the politics of difference are threatening to conservative aesthetics on sexualities, and troublesome in contesting colorblind discourses in society and challenging the authority of whiteness.

**Research in Process: New Direction, New Cuts**

Having my proposed study turned down by an organized authority made it important for me to avoid any bureaucracies that would get in between me, participants, and the unfolding of the study. Since conducting a yearlong field study was met with resistance because of certain topics, the thought of gaining approval in another district was daunting. Even if this was an overreaction, I began to imagine what the project might look like outside of schools through conversations with Sikh youth. The refusal of the ethnography was a challenge that was instrumental in effecting the methodological route I wanted to pursue as I changed the primary data collection strategy to individual and small group interviews. In shifting from an ethnography in a school setting to an interview based study, cuts were made in reconstructing the research and the type of knowledge produced within its pages. For example, when I was considering conducting an ethnography, difficulties in finding participants was not considered to be a major obstacle because approximately half the student population was Sikh in the schools I was interested in. However, in switching to an interview based study I worried about access to participants and friendship networks. Also, observations of school spaces and how youth used these spaces to challenge and reiterate their identifications was also thought to be a significant part of the original research. Now
the type of knowledge constructed within the pages of the dissertation was going to evolve as I would not have access to schools, teachers, policies, classroom procedures, assemblies, athletic events, or informal student interactions. This had an obvious influence on the direction of the study from how to practically proceed with finding participants, to how the data would be written up.

Being in a city where I had fewer contacts and connections made for a slow start to the study. All of a sudden, the Sikh communities of the Lower Mainland felt like a “hard to reach population” (Heckathorn, 2011, p. 355). After a number of failed attempts at securing participants and a growing sense of frustration, I decided to contact a Sikh youth group which met regularly at a university campus. Thankfully, the organization welcomed me as a guest at a meeting and allowed for a discussion to take place. At this meeting, a group of 11 students signed consent forms and sat down for a large group impromptu interview. This was the first noted interview of the study and the only one where I asked for a written response to the questions “What does it mean to be a Sikh?” in conjunction with oral responses.

At the end of the session a young women SA, quietly approached me and in a hushed tone volunteered for a one on one interview and added “I have more to say.” We scheduled a time and place to meet for what became the first individual recorded interview of the study. At the end of that interview, I asked SA if she knew of any other people who might be interested in working with me. Snowball sampling, where potential participants are sought through relationships made with those who have already taken part in the research was relied on for the rest of the study (Noy, 2008). SA said that she would pass on the details of my project to some friends that might be interested. Similarly, as I awaited her reply I contacted an acquaintance of mine who had extensive ties to Punjabi communities throughout the Lower Mainland. After some time, my contact alerted me to a young girl who attended high school in grade 8 who expressed interest in being a participant. Being aware of the age of the participant, parents were contacted and expressed enthusiasm in the research and asked me to come to their home to conduct an interview. In this way, the snowball method of gaining participation in the study slowly started to gain momentum.
The Participants

Once a verbal agreement had been obtained from participants to take part in the study (or with parents) there was a negotiation of possible places to go over consent forms and conduct the interviews. Often this had to do with logistics of participants travel and making things easier for them. I did not want participants’ perception of obstacles in arriving at interviews to thwart their desire for participation when I was already nervous about access to them. Hence, the venues where the interviews took place were as varied as the participants in the study. In total, 25 self-identified Sikh youth took part in the interviews in 9 different venues. Out of the 25 participants, 11 met as 1 large focus group. There were 5 small group interviews (4 or less participants) conducted in the homes participants. There were an additional 5 one on one interviews which also took place in different locations such as coffee shops, university campuses, and homes. Normally, sessions lasted anywhere from an hour to two hours in length. However, in the home interviews, I often stayed longer and socialized after interviews with families.

The participants ranged from 13 to 25 years of age and either chose their own pseudonym, chose multiple pseudonyms, chose certain initials to identify themselves, or requested that I assign a pseudonym to them. Eight of the participants were enrolled in high school, 11 were in their first two years of university, and the remaining 6 were at various stages of completing post-secondary educational programs or working. Notably, out of the 5 group interview situations, all aligned along gendered groupings of either all male identified or female identified. The only pre-requisite I consciously identified was that participants self-identify as Sikh and be between the ages of the 13-25. To my thinking, there were no restrictions placed on how many participants of a particular gender, socio-economic status, neighborhoods lived in, or schools attended. Yet in actuality, I unconsciously made several decisions about recruitment that I only became aware of during the writing of the dissertation.

For example, according to statements made during interviews, 12 females and 13 males participated in the study. I phrase the gender of participants in this manner because I concur with theorists who understand that although being male or female are the dominant discursive categories within which sexed bodies are defined, they are undoubtedly in question (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2012). Yet
while reflecting on the consent forms during the writing of the dissertation, I became aware of the language I used to inadvertently define the boundaries/cuts of the study as being interested in “educational experiences of boys and girls”. Further to this point are the covert ways in which my own subjugation as the principal researcher mark every aspect of the dissertation, even if initially unnoticed. The very wording of consent form evidences the influences of binary sexed/gendered thinking which may have had a material consequences in recruitment of participants, how data is understood, and what is written as knowledge (Talburt 2004; Youdell, 2009).

**Data Cuts: Individual and Group Interviews**

Individual and small group interviews were used in order to analyze sessions for particular discursive content as youth shared experiences, attitudes, and thoughts on various topics. Interviews are not simply dialogues between equals, but are indicative of power relations in specific contexts (Roulston et al., 2003). What is revealed and hidden by participants during interviews is greatly influenced by factors such as the topic discussed, who is in the room, where interviews are conducted, and the perceived status (insider/outsider) of the researcher (Innes, 2009). “By identifying points of domination” (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2007, p. 45) of regulatory practices and how participants challenge and resist these practices, the social context of interviewing becomes a major factor in data collection and analysis (Frosh et al., 2002; Archer, 2003). Participants might feel reluctant to disclose personal feelings on topics such as sexualities, or feel pressure to conform to normative gender expectations, or desire to provide a favorable image of oneself in individual or small group interviews (Hollander, 2004; Allen, 2005).

The participants in this study were given the option of choosing to be interviewed alone, or with any number of others. The purpose of this approach was to allow participants to have a choice in the process in an attempt to create a sense of safety and comfort. I deduced that by choosing who else was present, or not, participants might be willing to share their experiences more readily within a framework of a respectful conversation. Several interviewees chose to meet me alone and were asked about their thinking on the matter:

Kal: Was there any reason for meeting with me alone instead of with others?
Sim: I probably think different than most Punjabis. This isn’t good. Hahaha. I rather just talk about life and things without people listening in.

In agreement with Sim, another participant shared her preference for meeting individually:

GK: I don’t feel comfortable in groups. I don’t feel comfortable telling my personal issues or my personal point of view in front of anyone. So that’s why, yeah.

Like SA, the girl who approached me after the large group interview requesting an individual session, the main reason cited for meeting alone was discomfort in sharing private narratives in the presence of others one knows. Having opinions on various topics that differ from “most Punjabis” indicates that there is a tension between perceived “norms” within different cultural communities. These norms are communicated through discursive practices which are related to, opposed, or outright rejected. The tension in being “different” is real for Sim because there is a potential cost to the self in going against the grain, however that is understood. When SA approached me to be interviewed alone, it was at the end of the group interview as people were collecting their bags and jackets to leave. As she approached me, she spoke in a hushed tone and told me to contact her personally as she had “more to say.” What was it about the group setting that made SA not share some thoughts on questions asked? What was the “more” she wanted to share, and what triggered her quiet approach in asking me to meet one on one? These participants’ views demonstrates that the telling of stories within the social context of interviews is linked to the incompleteness of voice whenever “participants speak for themselves” (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p.745). This echoes an earlier point about the impossibility of analyzing data for “authentic” voice when context has the potential of playing such a significant role in what is said and not said.

Those who chose having others present cited being “more comfortable with friends”, and interviews being “less awkward” when conducted with a person they knew. These reasons are significant because not only do individuals speak, but there is an interactive component between participants as they support, encourage, regulate, shame, and socialize with each other during interviews (Kitzinger, 1994). Body movements such as finger pointing, laughter, head shaking, eye contact, fist bumping, raising voices, interrupting each other etc. are important signifying practices in groups and evidence power
dynamics. Through interaction with others, participant vulnerabilities, normative performances, and resistances have the potential to become evident. In addition, and of note in the present study, the actions which are deemed proper ethnic and religious performances are also policed by participants in group settings (Court & Abbas, 2013).

For example, going back to Raree’s comments earlier in this chapter about the types of students that attend Khalsa School serves as an example of interview power dynamics:

Raree: It's like the most overprotective parents raise the best liars. I brought it up one day when we (other Sikh friends) were at the beach and they were like, yeah! (Turns to co-interviewee, his friend Ardev, and wags his index finger inches from his face). No offence, but they said that's why all the Khalsa School kids are screwed up.

Ardev: (Backs his head up) A lot of them are (speaking softly).

Raree and his friend Ardev chose to do the interview together. However, Raree expresses his distaste for Sikh youth who attend religious schools and cites parents as pushing students to enroll. He turns to Ardev, who Raree knows attended Khalsa School in elementary and junior high school, and places his finger inches away from Ardev’s face in an aggressive manner. The finger pointing is used in conjunction with words in showing Raree’s disdain and reveals bodily acts, and not just words, are important discursive practices (Foucault, 1980). Ardev agrees, but he also recoils from Raree’s accusatory finger wagging and is placed under Raree’s authority and surveillance, which may have played a part in his acquiescence. I also note that his voice was “soft” as compared to Raree’s possible confidence in opinion and finger wagging. Therefore, there are no neutral interview situations, even among friends, where knowledge, power, and politics are absent (Owens, 2006). However, providing individual and group contexts for interviews opens potential spaces where some participants might feel more comfortable in sharing narratives in a one-on-one interview, while others may feel sharing in group settings is more conducive to their likings (Hollander, 2004).
Interview Protocol and Contexts

In conducting an interview study for the first time, I was still unconsciously desiring a semblance of order, stability, and clear beginnings and endings despite moving beyond these points in theory. One way this desire surfaced was repeating patterns in regards to wanting to make clear delineations as to when the interviews started and ended. Yet clear beginning and endings of interviews symbolized by the push of a record button was also the remnant of a type of qualitative research that assumes this is even possible (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). By this I mean the “interview” became something much more complex than what was captured in audio recordings. When analyzing “official transcripts,” the words of participants were only one part of a larger experience influenced by my own theorizing, words, the bodily movements of participants, where interviews took place, and memories that were there prior to, and long after recording.

To illustrate this point, each session began with some pleasantries and welcoming of participants (or welcoming of me in homes of some participants) followed by a quick review of the consent and assent forms where necessary. These interactions were not recorded. However, during notes made after each interview, I make repeated reference to wanting to relax participants and make things as comfortable as possible. I repeatedly refer to “joking around” or “having a laugh” with participants prior to recording the sessions. These repeated attempts at humor about various topics may have helped set a positive tone for interviews and relaxing participants. These same attempts at humor might also be read as a revelation about my own anxieties in entering the field setting and conducting the research. The laughter and smiles that were solicited helped me compose myself prior to any recording of audio. Then I noticed in one transcript, a transcript I had previously read over many times, that a participant referred back to something “joked” about prior to recording when answering a question later in the interview:

Kal: So think about other students in the school, or your teachers and your principals, or people you see in shopping centers and stuff like that. Do you think people understand Sikhs or do you think they are lacking understanding?
Simran: I think they’re lacking understanding. I think that they think, as you guys were saying before, like all Indians are just one. Like they’re not different.

What Simran is referring to when saying “as you guys were saying before” happened before the recording of the interview when her parents and I were sharing a “laugh”. While discussing the information in the consent forms with Simran’s mother and father, both parents shared stories about being mistaken for Hindus by non-Sikhs in the past. Although the parents were laughing about the incidents at the time of Simran’s interview, I do not know if these events were traumatic, if laughter was used to alleviate pain, or if the incidents became humorous given the passage of time. Nonetheless, Simran was present for this exchange as it occurred during the signing of the assent and consent forms prior to the recorded session. I was confronted with what Simran’s data fragment suggested about the research encounter. Clearly she made reference to something that was said between me and her parents. Did I inadvertently influence her response? Did she feel pressure to share sentiments similar to her parents? Did the conversation with her parents allow her to articulate her feelings in a way she had not thought of before? If the “interview” went beyond the simple “recorded” sessions, then how are data and analysis affected? What cuts become evident and for what purposes? These questions reiterate the challenges made to traditional qualitative research through poststructural theorizing on the inclusivity of voice, analyzing research contexts in knowledge production, and thinking through the ways researchers constantly emerge within their projects.

**Interview Scripts and Questions**

An interview protocol was made in the form of questions about themes such as schools and education, multiculturalism, media/pop culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. I did not intend to ask each question, but instead used the list of questions as conversation starters or to further assist in extrapolating answers. Of note is the overlap in these categories of questions. By this I mean that questions regarding media, race, gender, and religion were never separable from each other, but embedded within each other. To illustrate this point, when asking about social justice concerns during one particular interview my script read, “How do you feel about social justice issues such as racism, the
environment, sexism, and homophobia? Is this important to you at all? Why?” Yet the question that I asked specifically based on the flow of the conversation during one interview was “How do lesbian and gay Sikhs fit into the community?”

SA: It’s actually really interesting you're asking that because last week we had a group discussion on that topic. So my personal belief is that there's no difference between someone who is LGBTQ and someone who isn't. Other people, they're ok with LGBTQ in like normal society, but then when it comes to Anand Karaj (marriage ceremony in a gurudwara)\(^{18}\), then (all of a sudden) it's like “should two gay individuals be allowed to be married in a gurudwara”?... So a lot of stuff in gurbani (scriptures) talks about the bride and the groom, and the mother and the father. And the purpose of marriage in Sikhi (Sikhism) is kind of to have children, and also to enhance your connection with Sikhism.

SA’s response is complicated because the answer involves her understanding of race, religion, gender, and sexuality. SA shares her opinions on same sex or gay marriage by situating between what she calls “normal” society and the Anand Karaj ceremony in a Sikh gurudwara. Her use of the word “normal” to describe mainstream society has several possible meanings. Whatever the intent, “normal” spaces are differentiated from the presumably “not-normal”, culturally specific space of a Sikh temple, and the marriage ceremony held within. SA also identifies the normative power of heteronormativity in “other people” (other Sikhs) who are ok with gay and lesbians as long as “queer” activities do not take place in a gurudwara. Sikh scriptures are referred to as being steeped in heteronormative language which influences the practices within temples and discursive practices of adherents. Thus, it was impossible during interviews to ask questions where discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and religion did not unexpectedly converge, contradict, and inform each other.

The interview sessions were also influenced by going into areas that I had not intended to venture, but came up during conversations and formed the basis of new directions in the research. Two

\(^{18}\) Sikh temple.
examples which affected the subsequent data chapters come to mind. First, during the first three interviews, participants brought up how the caste system plays a role in how they identify and differentiate themselves from other Sikhs. Second, the significance of hair and its discursive and embodied importance to the corporeal identity of Sikh youth was theorized by participants in the first 4 interviews and noted in my research journal. As baptized Sikhs are theoretically required to keep hair uncut, hair becomes an important visible marker with various meanings attached. These conversations informed follow-up questions which were previously not considered, but were expanded upon based on narratives relevant to the participants. I also incorporated questions about caste and hair with the rest of the participants which spawned unanticipated conversations and theorizing.

**Contexts for Interviews**

As mentioned previously, where interviews take place can be important in what stories are shared, avoided, and remembered. Contexts contribute to “power asymmetries” (Kvale, 2006) which might alter how the primary researcher and participant come to position each other. As I conducted a few interviews in university classrooms and offices, it may have enhanced my academic background with participants. The space of the university may have given me a form of institutional legitimacy as an instructor or researcher. Conversely, meeting at coffee shops and homes of individual participant may have provided moments for different kinds of power dynamic to unfold. For example, an encounter during an interview in a crowded coffee shop resulted in repeatedly not being able to hear what the participant was saying. Not only was there background noise, the participant would speak quietly and I would have to lean forward to try and hear. At one point I stopped the recorder and asked if we should move to another location. The participant expressed frustration and said she did not want to be overheard in the coffee shop, but said we should just proceed with our conversation. I leaned forward at times and occasionally struggled to hear what was said, but we forged on. In the intimate setting of the coffee shop I was left to consider what was self-edited. What was unimaginable to say in this setting? What
experiences or memories were triggered? What different knowledge would have surfaced if we left the coffee shop? Was it ethical to stay if the participant was uncomfortable?

These questions are important to consider as the contexts of all interviews matters. For example, one group interview of four boys took place in one of the boys’ home. Two of the boys were brothers and they invited two other friends to join. Additionally, two sets of parents sat in an adjacent room, with the dividing door closed, visiting with each other during the interview. Often one of the parents would come into the living room where the interview was taking place in order to access other parts of the home. The four participants would look at who came into the room, sometimes change their speech patterns, exchange glances between each other, and also look at me to see my reaction. Although during the interviews we spoke about topics such as sexualities in school, racism, and some inappropriate behaviors participants had engaged in, proximity to parents may have influenced what was disclosed or which topics they spoke to in more detail. There was a point when I wanted to ask the boys if they were bothered by any of the movement around them, but I chose not to. I did not want to make the boys nervous and I also felt requesting the parents not to enter the room would be disrespectful.

Before another interview, a father asked me to drive with him to the local Indian butcher shop because he wanted to purchase chicken and barbeque for me. This excursion also took us to the liquor store before we returned back to the home. In this particular interview the father politely requested that I share drinks and dinner with his family prior to beginning my interview. The two high school aged participants were witness to me partaking food and drink, and also shared in food and the different conversations taking place. Again, in this situation I was left to wonder how the actual interview and responses given were affected. Did the sharing at dinner enhance feelings of comfort and trust in me that might have had a productive impact on the participants? Was the time the dinner and interview took a burden for the youth participants who might have had better things to do with their evening? Might the responses have been shortened or abbreviated as a result?
These questions might be inquires that can be made relative to all of the multiple contexts in which interviews take place. That is, wondering about the knowledge produced and foreclosed during interviews with participants in contexts such as homes remain relevant and can influence the research (Nousiainen, 2015). However my approach is also participant-centric in that my inquiries relate to what might change or what might be different in relation to participants across contexts. Here, I become aware that my interview questions, my body language, words I choose to use, and how relaxed or tense I might be feeling also can be influenced by context. In other words, what became easier for me as an interviewer in some contexts, and what became impossible in others? Did I feel more relaxed or comfortable as a result of having dinner prior to the interview? What impact did that have on my communication style or clarity? Did I rush through the interview because it was conducted hours after I thought it would? As a result, contexts do not only have consequences for participants, but also researcher attempts to communicate agendas might be differently performed and thus pose important ramifications for what becomes accessible and impossible during interviews (Phoenix, 2013).

**Ambivalence of Coding and Analysis**

During and immediately after interviews, I took time to make notes about aspects of the interviews which caught my attention as the primary researcher. These notes served as analyzable texts, yet I did not go through the process of in-depth coding of these notes. Instead, notations were used to remind me of things that I noticed in each particular interview during the process of transcribing and data analysis of a particular session. These notes helped in theorizing data transcripts as the words which populated transcriptions on their own can only represent one layer of understanding discourses. For example, the notes focussed on body movements such as pointing, humorous episodes where participants would laugh, uncomfortable moments where glances were exchanged or eye contact avoided, when voices were quiet or loud, and those occasions where participants reacted to others not involved in the interviews.
I conducted all of the transcribing duties myself using *Express Scribe* software where I could control the speed, rewind, and fast forward audio files of interviews. After transcribing interviews, I used the open coding method (Saldana, 2009) where no pre-determined limits were set on the number of codes or themes in hopes of generating an abundance of potential topics to be written about. Over 40 repeating codes were recorded such as Sikhs and education, Sikhism and the body, media and Sikhs, and gender expressions throughout the first pass of analysis (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). This was cause for excitement in the potential of repeating codes evolving into themes, and future chapters of the dissertation. As some of the codes were quite similar, I collapsed these within each other to better manage my enthusiastic coding. For example, “gender expressions” and “the body” were collapsed into the emerging theme of “gender performance”.

As other themes such as “Difference”, “Multiculturalism”, and “Globalization” began to take form, I would place relevant participant data fragments and also any observations from my research notes underneath these themes. An example of this is under the theme of “Difference” where a quote from Nav (see page 129) about differences between baptized Sikh females and non-baptized Sikh females was placed alongside my observation that Nav opens her eyes wide and raises her voice when saying the word “No!”. Therefore, the theme, the direct participant quote, and my notes were used in conjunction in an attempt to add nuance and analysis to transcriptions. Yet all of the work and effort that went into coding also caused a crisis in analysis where I began to question my desire to code in a dissertation which theoretically does not adhere to the numerical significance of any code. Was I slipping back into looking for data that would accurately represent the world of Sikh youth through language and “efficiently categorizing, organizing, and counting data” (Augustine, 2014, p. 748)? Noting the number of times a topic comes up and placing a code beside it means that I, the researcher, noticed the code, see its relevance, and am invested in the same codes emerging again.

During second pass coding and after collapsing of themes within each other, I began to look at the data fragments as theory (Loutzenheiser, personal communication, September 2016). The methodological implications are a shift away from representing stability, categorizing scientifically, and counting data. In
other words “the analyst must work at the surface and examine practices rather than going deep, looking for origins and hidden meanings that exist outside being” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 649-650). I am not suggesting that numbered coding and the subsequent themes which resonate should be abandoned in interpretive qualitative research. However, researcher coding and creation of themes are evidence of theoretical and methodological cuts that are too “often divorced from the theory that supposedly guides the study” (Augustine, 2014, p. 748). The cuts made by coding serve as demarcations of what is important, what is worthy of writing about, and what knowledge is advocated for or left behind.

I began to use my research notes and official transcripts in tandem to remind myself to look for ways youth put the concept Sikh into practice, rather than looking to represent what being Sikh “was”. In a methodological turn to investigating how the term Sikh allowed youth to variously live their lives, as opposed to looking to represent the real, data was turned into theory as discursive practices allowed for connections and representation to become evident (Talburt, 2004). This changed the way I looked at the data and what I was expecting the data to accomplish within the study.

SA: I feel like you can say that people are Sikh even if their hair is cut, but they just have a different amount of connection with the religion. So obviously if you are keeping your hair, and wearing your five Ks (five symbols of faith some baptized Sikhs wear on their body) and doing your paat (prayers) and everything, you have a different connection to the religion than someone who cuts their hair or goes to the gurudwara (temple) once in a while.

SA explains the intensification of being Sikh through the discursive practices of keeping hair, wearing the five K’s, doing regular prayers, and attending temple. There is no outright dismissal of those who do not follow these practices, but SA acknowledges a “different connection to the religion” through the material effects of discourses she feels enhances this connection on some level. As a girl who has never cut her hair (she wears her hair back in a long ponytail), SA’s data fragment has theoretical and methodological implications. She allows for an understanding of being Sikh through what the concept allows/disallows (her hair, an increased connection with faith, praying regularly, wearing symbols of the faith) her to think and how to represent herself. The interaction between data, theory, and methodology is evident in that SA
is not representative of a category under the banner or code “Sikh Youth and Gender Performance” but is understood through the connections and foreclosures made possible through material effects of discourse (Butler, 2004).

**Cutting Inside and Outside: Insider/Outsider Researcher**

The final cuts that I analyze in this chapter are the consequences of my positionality as a researcher within the study. I have alluded to this positionality throughout the chapter referring to the “unaddressed I” (Pinar, 2009) which inevitably surfaces in all aspects of the research process. However, in this section, I refer to what is commonly understood as insider/outsider debates within qualitative research (Innes, 2009) and what these debates allow or disallow in research. Of particular importance for this dissertation were the discursive practices which might have operated to highlight commonalities with the participants, and moments where I was positioned as an outsider to their experiences. The fluidity of these positionalities (as opposed to binary opposites) is important “because the researcher’s position in relation to his or her participant has a direct impact on the knowledge that is co-created between them” (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015, p. 91). In this section, being in-between the binary of inside and outside will be discussed in relation to the cuts made in the dissertation. These cuts in knowledge making have important epistemological and ethical consequences through how researchers understand their relationship to groups under study, how participants understand this relationship, what knowledge is created as a result, and how discursive practices might reiterate and re-signify this relationship within interview settings.

**Researcher, Language, and Context: Constructing the Insider**

The discursive practices interviewees and I participate in are representative of “issues of privilege and power in research relationships as well as issues of commonality and difference” (Obasi, 2014, p. 61). These power relations are evidenced throughout the research as certain words, language, knowledge of history, and familiarity with rituals would momentarily establish me as someone “sharing the characteristic, role, or experience” (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2015, p. 55) with participants. My name on the call for participants, my skin, and my speech patterns all may have contributed to constituting me as
someone with insider knowledge of participant experiences. As will be discussed below, being positioned as an insider in these moments could only happen through participant acknowledgment, and through their own words and actions. Did my perceived status allow for certain conversations to take place? Can insider knowledge of racialized, religious, ethnic, and gender communities provide avenues for creating new knowledge? What are the dilemmas of being constituted as an insider? What are the ethical commitments to communities under study if researchers are thought to be insiders?

Ardev: “It makes me proud to see upanay (our own people, plural form) that succeed. When I walked in (to the interview) and I saw you, and you’re Kal… it makes me happy upanay are doing good stuff” (Ardev giving me a half hug)

Throughout the interviews, there were moments participants recognized me as someone with special knowledge about the Sikh community. In the quote above, Ardev sees me, and reacts to the discursive meaning my body has in relation to the context of the interview. Ardev makes this clear by stating “It makes me proud to see upanay (one of our own people, plural form) that succeed”. Presumably, the “good stuff” that I am doing in making him proud is my position as an academic conducting research into the lives of young Sikhs. Ardev also uses the term upanay as a form of acknowledgement of my unique status as in conducting the research. Upana (singular) and upanay (plural) are terms that are regularly used by different South Asian groups when speaking about people who have a shared history, understand socio-cultural rituals, and know about the day to day struggles and triumphs of each other. Ardev communicates being “happy” not only through his words, but through his body as he smiles, shakes my hand, hugs me with one arm, and pats my back. The intimacy of the moment, through physical touch “did not need to be publically acknowledged in order for it to occur or be recognized as meaningful” (O’Donoghue, 2012, p. 313). The intimacy was indicative of how my positionality as an insider was constituted in this moment. Other participants repeatedly used words and phrases such as “we”, “us”, and “you know how it is” as they positioned me within their day to day experiences. For me to “know how it is” implies that there is a commonality of experience, a shared history, or normative interpretation of every day events as Sikhs.
During another interview with SA, the topic of me being a teacher/researcher came up several times. SA shares her positive feelings about Sikh educators and states that “you can actually talk with them about things like your family and things that they actually could understand”. SA understands me as a Sikh educator and views this as a potential precursor for “understanding”. The discursive practices which constitute my insider status as an “upana” to Ardev and SA may have been instigated before our face to face meeting. The consent form, my name on the form, how the consent form was worded, and my body may have all combined in the construction of me as an insider researcher. Both participants share something positive about this discursive positioning which may have allowed for conversations that might not have if I was a non-Sikh.

These dynamics were also evident when meeting parents during home interviews in the presence of participants. When arriving at the home of participants, I was greeted with hugs, handshakes, and offers of food and drink. Parents shared positive sentiments about a member of the Punjabi Sikh community pursuing a Ph.D. in education with a focus on their community. On one occasion, I was conversing with parents for almost an hour prior to interviewing their daughter. In addition, having some knowledge about Sikh families and how to enter and leave these spaces, I made it a point to be available after interviews and not just leave quickly. I assumed that parents would take some of their precious time in order to provide me with food and entertainment, and I was correct in this estimation. During the home interviews, I could smell food being prepared for me, and the sound of pots, pans, and kitchen utensils would filter into the rooms where I was conducting interviews. After interviews in homes, I would stay, sometimes for hours and eat traditional Indian meals with parents and their children. Together we spoke about our family histories, places of birth, religion, real estate, pop cultural, and present day news media. Often parents would equate my status in pursuing a Ph.D. with knowing how to direct their children (even the ones not participating in the study) in scholastic achievement and future careers paths. When I offered

19 For men, it is often customary to shake hands with other men. However, in regards to greeting women in Punjabi culture, shaking hands with the opposite sex in social settings is not the norm. Often a hug or placing your palms together and exchanging greetings is more normative for males when meeting females.
general advice on building good study habits, one father encouraged his children to listen to their Paji (brother) because I was an “expert”. All of these words, actions, and body movements have discursive importance in positioning me as an insider.

**Speaking Punjabi**

Language use for racialized subjects has always been “deeply connected to race and racial self-understanding” (Young & Martinez, 2014, p. 4-5) and “produces emotional and racial effects” (p. 5). Therefore, being able to speak and understand Punjabi, especially colloquial phrases and slang, may have had the effect positioning as an insider. Although English was the main language spoken during interviews, participants tacked back and forth using Punjabi. Certain participants used more Punjabi throughout the interviews than others, but every interview contained some aspects of communicating in Punjabi. “**Punglish**” can be understood as an example of code-meshing where languages are blended with each other in communicating identities rather than code-switching which signals two distinct sets of languages (Young, 2013). **Punglish** shows the effects of languages, grammar rules, and cultural language cues being read through each other to create new types of expressions in previously unavailable ways.

The code-meshing of words and grammar rules offers new ways to communicate which do not simply leave either language behind, but mark one language within the other. When Ardev shares with me that he used to be a baptized Sikh, but no longer follows the faith traditions associated, he says “I was amritshuck-ed” (I was a baptized Sikh). Ardev uses the Punjabi phrase *amrit-shuck* and amalgamates it with the “ed” ending used in English past tense verbs such as played, hanged, or looked. Similarly, AJ, Bava, and Harji use code-meshing in a conversation about their parents’ constant evaluation and monitoring of their peer groups:

AJ: If they (parents) see a kid walking down the street, let's say my mom is driving me to school, she would say "ah dhay druggie jaya" (here is a druggie) (Laughter).

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20 **Punglish** is used as a variation of ‘**Spanglish**’ (Spanish and English) which denotes how Latino immigrant communities in the United States combine both Spanish and English, or use words in both languages when speaking (Rothman & Rell, 2005).

21 *Amrit* means holy water, and to *shuck* means to ingest.
Bava: Like my dad thinks they are bad.

Harji: Yeah, they (parents) go "othay na rao jadha cher" (don’t stay over there too long) or they say kids will just hand you drugs.

Bava: If they (parents) go to the classroom, they are like "una tho buchkay rao" (stay away from those types of kids).

As AJ, Bava, and Harji share what their parents say about potentially risky friendship groups, they speak Punjabi because they think I will understand. They could have spoken English, but in using the language spoken in their homes and by their parents they position me as someone who might know something about the inner workings of their day to day live. Code-meshing is therefore a practical tool in communication, and also shows a commonality with the researcher who speaks that language, and is familiar with terms and expressions. Theoretically, using code-meshing could have several functions. It might be that youth could not find words in English which expressed their feelings, thoughts, intentions, or emotions so they used Punjabi words and phrases instead. *Punglish* might also be considered a way of resisting the dominance of having to speak English in social spaces where most interactions are governed by using the English language. The power dynamics in using *Punglish* with a researcher who shares the cultural capital to understand language nuances places the authority with participants to choose when and where to infuse Punjabi into conversations instead of being dictated by others.

All of the parents of participants interviewed in homes were immigrants to Canada from the Punjab, and Punjabi was their first language. When first meeting parents, I would greet them with the phrase “Sat-sri-akal” which is a respectful way to say hello among Punjabis. The decision to speak Punjabi was enacted because I felt parents might be more comfortable with my status as a researcher if I spoke their first language, and I wanted to enter their home in a respectful way. There remains a certain degree of cultural capital in speaking Punjabi with elders because many second and third generation Punjabi-Canadians struggle with bilingualism. Yet when I spoke Punjabi with parents, there was also the issue of my own desire to be understood as an insider to their lives, customs, and language. Participants
were also present for these interactions with parents, and therefore my actions may have had an impact on what languages were spoken during interviews.

Speaking Punjabi is a discursive practice which could be viewed as having ethical consequences for entering research spaces. As a qualitative researcher, I am aware of discussions on topics such as entering Indigenous spaces and protocols which are considered respectful. For example, at the university level, often presentations are commenced with an acknowledgement of the unceded territory in which proceedings take place. There are also protocols for conducting research in schools and with youth of a certain age that are taken into consideration. My interactions with Sikh parents brings to light how there needs to be a conversation about other communities and what might be respectful ways of engaging in research with these groups. To be clear, I am not suggesting a checklist of “things to do” when entering a Sikh family’s home. However, having some degree of cultural competence such as knowing what gestures might be seen as respectful, or understanding ways of honoring Sikh families when entering their homes are related to the ethics of research and could make certain types of knowledge accessible.

**Outsider Within: Participants Cut Back**

My cultural identifications which may have helped build a level of trust and access to Sikh participants serves to make important cuts in the data. These cuts effect data, analysis, and how Sikhs might be represented within research as a result of the unique positionality. Yet there were differences between me and the participants which were referred to at times in each of the interviews. These interactions disrupt the neat, clean, linear narrative that there is a stable researcher positionality called the “insider”. The various differences enacted by participants show how participants constantly cut-back and trouble the notion that we can ever occupy the space of “forever insider”. Some of the differences were overt such as my perceived sex, age in relation to participants, religious affiliations\(^\text{22}\), and social/occupational status. These differences were situationally brought up by participants during interviews:

\(^{22}\) I am clearly not a baptized Sikh so assumptions about my religious affiliations (if any) can be made through my body.
Kal: Should we be dating Chinese, goray (white people)…?

Bava: As a professor, I don't know if you'll like this answer.

Kal: No. I'm just here to listen to you.

Bava: Um…I'm more of a desi bundha (old school, Indian guy). I think stick with upania (one of our own; Punjabi girls), right. Like Chinese (and Punjabi) mix kids will be something like Wong-Dhillon and stuff (laughter). It's screwed up (laughter). You professor types don't see things that way.

In this excerpt, the conversation veered into the area of dating in multicultural high schools. I inadvertently use the word “we” when asking Bava about dating and refer to white people by the Punjabi word goray. Looking back at the transcripts I cannot be sure why I used the Punjabi word for white people, but I obviously felt that Bava would understand. This might be considered a moment where having insider knowledge in the research setting allowed for expression in Punjabi. However, Bava quickly reveals that our cultural and gender similarities are not enough to erase discursive differences which are present during research. In this case, he is unsure if he should share his opinion that Punjabis should only date other Punjabis. Bava has come to understand me as a “professor” simply because I have some connection with a university. He associates being a professor with liberal opinions on interracial dating which are contrary to his personal belief on the topic. When pressed to share whatever is on his mind, Bava states that Punjabis (males) should “stick with upania” (our own kind, females) and that “you professor types don’t see things that way”.

Bava positions me outside of his experience in relation to my perceived occupation and perhaps age. Despite the moments where we share language and insider knowledge about Sikh culture, he is cautious about me in this particular part of the interview. Bava’s trepidation highlights differences which affect what might be said during interviews between positioning the researcher as an insider/outsider. Eventually Bava shares his opinion on dating, but questions remain. Would Bava offer the same statement to a female researcher, a white researcher, or a researcher of Chinese decent? Did my gender or cultural familiarity open the space for the conversation to continue? Were there other times during the interview
Bava censored himself based on other differences? There is no sure way to know, but the important aspect of the exchange is the tenuous nature of insider/outsider positionalities in research and how “we are always ‘in’ our data” (Youdell, 2010, p.93) as primary investigators.

There were other differences which were less obvious than gender/sex and occupational status as a representative of a university. My possible caste associations as they were understood by participants surfaced in some interviews and became a part of how I was positioned. To give context, caste systems of social stratification are prevalent in many Indian subcontinent socio/cultural/religious groups (Oberoi, 1994). These hierarchies can influence everything from marriage choices, to educational opportunities, to social mobility. Although one of the central tenets in Sikh scriptures is the denunciation of caste based discrimination, many of the participants were aware of its importance in Punjabi communities. Of significance for insider/outsider notions of researchers, this was one of the differences at play between my body and that of my participants.

For example, in an interview with Peekay, we have an uncomfortable exchange around which caste she believes I belong to in relation to her. As the interview progressed, the topic of the Jatt (associated with farming in India) caste came up a number of times as Punjabis with Jatt affiliations are very prevalent throughout British Columbia. Peekay had been hinting towards not having a favorable opinion about Jatt males in particular and looked at me in a way which I interpreted as trying to guess if I affiliated myself with being Jatt. I never indicate whether I identify with caste constructs or not, but I sensed Peekay had something to say on the topic so I asked:

Kal: So does caste matter, even if by Sikh religious standards it shouldn't?

Peekay: It does unfortunately, it does.

Kal: How is Jatt articulated by you?

Peekay: Uh oh. HAHAHA (loud ‘forced’ laugh, avoiding eye contact)…

Kal: Feel free. It doesn't matter.

Peekay: I think they are very, very, very open hearted, warm hearted people. Like most hospitable people by far… Um, but at the same time hahaha. I find the Jatt community, not
everyone, but they have this backwards mentality where men are better than women, or they degrade women. They are uneducated, I don't like the way they sit, they talk, and they eat, nothing. I feel like it's just...Their mannerisms are just not good.

By saying “uh oh” when I ask her directly about caste, Peekay seems to intuit there is a difference at play during this portion of the interview in regards to my caste and gender performance. Throughout this interview I do not indicate if I even identify with caste constructs. I even encourage her to speak her mind in my haste to get answers. She clearly is not enthralled by those who identify as Jatt, however she does not want to risk offending me, the researcher. She even tries to compliment Jatts as best as she can before she can get to her critique, perhaps in an effort to appease me. She further elaborates her opinion on the caste issue:

Peekay: They (Jatt males) don't know how to treat women, they just don't. My friends tell me so many stories about how their brothers get spoiled out of their mind, and they get nothing. Their parents buy them (Jatt boys) BMWs, and Mercedes, or Range Rovers, and Hummers, and the girls get nothing. In my family it's the complete opposite. I've seen houses where they (Jatts) put up massive pictures of their sons and no pictures of their daughters. That is horrid to us. We don't get it.

The “us” and “we” Peekay refers to in this instance is her identification with the Khatri caste, defined as middle-class business owners in Indian society, which clearly set her apart from the Jatt caste associated with the working class, or farmers. Peekay relays that she feels Jatts do not treat women well and exhibit a hyper-masculinity. This is against her ethical sensibilities and allows her to conclude, “That’s horrid to us. We don’t get it.” To Peekay, words such as “us” and “we” are used to differentiate two different social communities with what she feels are different ethical commitments within Punjabi Sikh culture.

Peekay’s words, laughter, and body movements suggests she is also trying to process how to address the issue of caste during our interview or how this might be relevant in thinking about my insider/outsider status.
Conclusion

As participants and researcher share cultural affiliations in interviews, slippages in identity categories acknowledge that perceived cultural sameness is in a process of constant negotiation (Youdell, 2006). There are no easy insiders or outsiders in research settings. Instead the context of research, such as individual and small group interviews, is considered to be another social setting where discourses about identity categorizations continue to operate. This shifts the focus of analysis to the relationships constructed within research and to the “discursive practices through which subjects are constituted, sustained, contested and reinscribed” (Youdell, 2006, p. 69). In being identified as a part of the culture I was researching, there was an effect on my status in the imagination of the participants. There was also a constant negotiation of difference taking place where my status and the material consequences of such sense making in identity construction was evident (Lather, 2007).

In this chapter, methodologies and theories used in research were discussed as apparatuses which make cuts in knowledge production. The apparatus of qualitative research, a tool of investigating social phenomenon, makes cuts which serve to define how concepts such as voice, experience, and data are put to work within this project. Cuts do not just make boundaries, they also assist in accounting for the fluidity of research encounters. How participants, the researcher, and context are embedded within each other trouble notions that data truths are out there just waiting to be revealed. Poststructural methodological cuts move beyond truth seeking to investigate the discursive investments made by youth in representing who they are. This is not done in an effort to label, but to investigate the discourses which impact subjectivities and influence how youth understand their selfhood.

The methodological framework employed in this study was a part of my continued evolution as a student and scholar. In moving from a desire to capture voice, to giving voice to others, to understanding youth experiences as discursively produced, cuts were made into what knowledge was possible and advocated for. Challenges along the way including altering the main method of data collection foreclosed and opened avenues of investigation and shows the tenuous relationship between methodology and knowledge produced. The “performative constitution of selves and others” (Youdell, 2003, p. 3) makes
evident how the researcher’s and participants’ understanding of each other influences what is said, hidden, forgotten, and emphasized. I now turn to the data analysis chapters of the dissertation to further investigate the consequences of the cuts discussed in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3
Multicultural Perspectives

Poly: Put it this way. We are multicultural people in a multicultural society and that means things are gonna be good and bad. There’s nothing you can do about it (16 year old Sikh male).

Jasmine: Basically more than half of my school is multicultural and are fairly into it. Guys and girls all doing multicultural things. The other half are (multicultural) too, but they just don’t know it or they don’t care (15 year old Sikh female).

The quotes from Poly and Jasmine which begin this chapter are two examples of the multiple ways youth might understand multicultural discourses in the context of living in the Lower Mainland23. For example, Poly’s declaration, “we are multicultural people living in a multicultural society” describes both the subjects of multiculturalism and the larger societal contexts in which people live. The fact that “there is nothing you can do about it” presupposes that multiculturalism is a fait accompli, as a pre-condition of the state of affairs in living in the generalized Lower Mainland and Canada. It is as if multiculturalism is in the air, infectious, ready to infiltrate young docile bodies. Yet Poly is also ambivalent about the consequences for multicultural people living in a multicultural society as he states that “things are gonna be good and bad”. Jasmine, on the other hand, uses multicultural(ism) to describe the specific institutional site of her school and the students who attend. In the context of her school Jasmine observes “guy and girls all doing multicultural things” and describes all students as multicultural even if “they just don’t know it or they don’t care”. Jasmine’s thinking references bodies in the process of “doing” multiculturalism and/or having multiculturalism “done” to them as they come to recognize other students’ actions and practices. Even though Jasmine does not specify what these “doings” entail, her use of multiculturalism shows her “conscious ideals of behavior and, indeed, outlines… the very merits of identity itself” (Thomas, 2011, p. 28).

23 Colombo (2015) underlines this complexity and calls multiculturalism “a polysemous term” (p. 801) with contingent meanings, while Wright (2012), after Hall (1997), advocates for taking up multiculturalism as a “floating signifier” (p. 106) because of its variegated uses and meanings across different western societies.
The similarities and differences in the way Poly and Jasmine deploy multiculturalism are significant as they show that discourses about multiculturalism do not take one specific path, but might be utilized for different purposes by different subjects. This suggests that the multiplicities of meanings and potential future interpretations of multiculturalism within the multicultural imaginary are “unstable, fragmentary, incomplete, and unpredictable, rather than ‘fixed’” (Eveline & Bacchi, 2010, p. 147). In this chapter, I attempt to unpack the regulatory and productive effects of multiculturalism through “rules or, more precisely, the routinized sets of heterogeneous relations among bodies, things, actions, concepts and so on, at work in the formation and operation of discourse, understood as knowledge” (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 183). Moreover, I investigate how Canadian Sikhs are influenced by multicultural discourses in making sense of their identities. Therefore, defining a singular definition of multiculturalism is foregone in favour of asking questions such as: Which multicultural discourses resonate with Sikh youth? Which discourses constitute common sense, or normative understandings of multiculturalism? How might these understandings open space for investigating the ways in which Sikh identities are performed, regulated, and resisted? In this way, I pursue the possible ramifications of multicultural discourses as a “vehicle through which ontological effects are established and installed” (Butler, 1996, p. 112) through bodily “doings”. Therefore, I seek the material effects of discourses of multiculturalism “involved in the characterization and experience of ‘the real’” (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 176) as pertaining to the subjection of Sikh youth within the multicultural imaginary.

**Mapping the Chapter**

Before a more sustained discussion and analysis of the way participants take-up multicultural discourses, it may be beneficial to briefly outline Canada’s historical national investment in state sanctioned “official” multiculturalism. This detour is significant in regards to youth in this study because the history of multiculturalism has implications for expectations, desires, present understandings, and future possibilities for multiculturalism. This will be followed by a more in-depth presentation of performativity theory alongside what Wise and Velayutham (2010) describe as “everyday multiculturalism”. The work of Judith Butler (2004) is explored in order to discuss its potential in
understanding the ways ethno-racial subjectivities and identities might be constituted in the multicultural imaginary through the process of subjection, or how “one becomes a subject” (Davies, 2006, p. 425).

Then I move to data analysis of the ways participants perform their Sikh identities through understandings of normative multicultural discourses, and how youth reiterate, and re-signify the norms of Canadian multiculturalism.

**Canadian Multiculturalism: “Just don’t be too crazy.”**

Manny: I think multiculturalism is a very tough subject. I think the first issue is that Canada is first and foremost a bi-cultural country. It's Anglo and Francophone. The idea of being multicultural when it first started was great. It allowed for immigration, increased the population, and increased the understanding of different cultures and religions in society. What's limiting now is the fact that we go to schools, and even in the Canadian government, we still have only French and English as dominant languages and cultures, right. If the idea of multiculturalism was supposed to be an increase of understanding of different cultures, it worked but… I don't know where you want to draw the line. The government still is limiting our society to an Anglo and Franco society.

Ishar: Multiculturalism means that everybody, this entire country is a mixture. There's English and French, like Quebec. There are German people. Then there are *upanay* (our people; Sikhs) and Chinese and stuff. Multiculturalism means that, and everybody is supposed to be equal. Even a refugee has the same amount of rights as somebody born here. They have rights to a lawyer, and rights to a trial, and those types of things. You can wear *pugs* (turbans) and you can do *bhangra*. You can do whatever you want. Just don’t be too crazy.

Manny and Ishar share the significance of thinking about their multicultural present, through the historic evolution of multiculturalism in Canada as they understand it. Both participants share recitations of a larger citational chain which links the Canadian nation with specific bodies. Specifically, linking the history of Canada to British and French relations is part of a larger reoccurring theme that Canada is a “white nation” with policies that are structured by, and for the benefit of certain citizens (Bannerji, 2000;
Thobani, 2007; Flera, 2014). Although I address this point later in this chapter, for now, it will suffice to say that Manny and Ishar’s reference to European ethnic groups are citations which reiterate the idea of belonging in Canada as a hierarchy between those that clearly belong (English, French, Germans), and those that are tolerated or accommodated (uponay, Chinese). Therefore, Manny and Ishar’s particular responses serve as an entry point to addressing the history of Canadian multiculturalism, the regulatory effects of discourse through subjection, and the performative aspect of multicultural identities.

Manny’s knowledge of the nation’s past is tied to his present as he describes the government, and by extension schools, reinforcing Anglo and French dominance. Although Manny expresses some of the benefits of post 1970’s immigration and reiterates liberal notions of cultures “getting to know each other”, he ultimately is cautious about praising the current state of multiculturalism. In claiming that multiculturalism is “limiting”, Manny offers an indictment of what he sees as a nation building strategy for the benefit of “Anglo and Franco society”. He also straightforwardly names a perpetrator in building the nation, “the government”, as the mechanism of domination that filters multiculturalism into societal institutions such as schools, and skews the nation into benefiting those of Western European descent.

Ishar also sees multiculturalism from the perspective of the nation, or as he puts it “this entire country”. What makes his statement slightly different than Manny’s is that Ishar moves between thinking of multiculturalism as part of Canada’s national lineage, to more explicitly speaking to specific embodied practices, such as wearing “pugs” (turbans) and doing “bhangra” (dancing) within the context of defining multiculturalism. That is, Ishar suggests that normative practices that Sikhs might participate in (wearing turbans and dancing) are defined as “multicultural”, and so is the nation. Ishar recognizes himself as a multicultural subject and he reiterates multiculturalism in Canada as inclusive, liberal, based on rights, tolerance, and “equality” where you can “do what you want”. Importantly, however, placed alongside liberal understandings of multiculturalism where everyone has rights and is respected, is the accompanying injunction, “Just don’t be too crazy”. Here, Ishar suggests that identities can be constituted within his understanding of multiculturalism, yet these identities are also policed and regulated through mechanism of power where sanctions might loom for potential multicultural transgressions.
Manny and Ishar’s quotes address how youth are subjected to/by the power of multicultural discourses in the present, which are informed by the historicity of multiculturalism’s past. In Foucault’s (1993) analysis, power works on and through bodies through techniques of domination which forces subjects to “take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination” (p. 203). This version of power is echoed by Manny as he critiques the power/domination of the state in the shaping the affairs of the public, and by Ishar as he actually regulates himself and others through not acting “too crazy”. Therefore, the complexity of power emerges in different formations such as government interventions, and also through individuals policing the normative boundaries of their own multicultural identities (Hall, 2000; Weedon, 2015). Put differently, the past and the present of Canadian multiculturalism inform each other in the various ways they are reiterated. I now turn to briefly situating multiculturalism in Canada within a historical framework as a pathway into a larger discussion on Sikh youth and identities. I do not attempt to give a detailed history of Canadian multiculturalism, but instead rely on an overview of important events in order to assess how participants might come to recognize themselves and others as multicultural subjects.

The Evolution of Canadian Official Multiculturalism

Leung (2011) reminds that Canadian multiculturalism cannot be decontextualized from “the specific historical, political, social and cultural conditions at the time it was created” (p. 20). In the Canadian context, multiculturalism might be productively approached as a proposed solution to a set of pending social problematica looming in the nation state at the time of its introduction into the popular vernacular. That is, the advent of “official” multiculturalism as national policy is perhaps most intimately associated with the growing ethnic conflict between the two “founding” ethnic groups of Canada, the English and French (Ishar mentions these groups first in his quote above). During the 1960s and 1970s, an increasing nationalist sentiment growing in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution sought to address

24 I fully acknowledge the problematica of ignoring Indigenous people in referring to the English and French as “founding” groups. Instead, I refer to “founding” in the way it repeated within the multicultural imaginary, thus influencing how youth might come to know multiculturalism.
grievances many Quebecois citizens had in regards to cultural and linguistic marginalization. The growing disquiet over culture between the European settler powers was first addressed through the efforts of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission of 1963-1969. The goal of the commission was to investigate “Quebec’s role and place in Canada and the relationship between the English and French in Canada” (Wong & Guo, 2015, p. 2) while preserving national unity. To this end, a major change established by the commission was the Official Languages Act of 1969 which gave English and French equal status in government related services, and reinforced French language integrity through changes to language education across the nation. The B and B Commission also had an additional finding which was critical in pushing the nation further toward “official” multiculturalism. Through interviews with citizens and conducting research across the country, Commissioners found many Canadians refuted the bicultural focus of the national agenda. Importantly, during the time of the commission, “the demographic composition of the Canadian population contained only three percent of non-European origin” (Leung, 2011, p. 21). Therefore, it was mostly white-European settlers (Ishar mentions Germans after English and French) who desired recognition of their histories within the framework of Canada beyond the English/French dichotomy.

The concerns over cultural survival for some French nationalist took a particularly violent path through the actions of the Front de liberation du Quebec. During the October Crisis of 1970, tensions reached a crescendo as political kidnappings, bombings, and the murder of the Deputy Premier of Quebec Pierre Laporte contributed to the federal Liberals instituting the War Measure’s Act in an attempt to navigate an end to the ethnic conflict (Willinsky, 2012). In the aftermath, the Trudeau administration desired to assuage tensions between English and French nationalists and attempted a double political move. The Liberals presented a platform of paying tribute to the unique bi-cultural language legacy of both French and English peoples in Canada, while simultaneously recognizing the multi-cultural “others” of the nation (Haque, 2012). This was deemed the best strategy to avoid further animosities between the English and French, and also addressing the need to appease an increasingly diverse electorate across the nation. Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau asserted as much by saying:
…there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other… Sometimes the word bi-culturalism is used, but I don’t think it accurately describes this country. I prefer multiculturalism (Fleras & Elliot, 1992, p. 281).

Thus, “official” multiculturalism within a bilingual framework emerged in its contested and precarious journey in becoming “ingrained in the national psyche” (Wright, 2012, p. 105) within a clearly Canadian contextual history.

**Critiques of Multiculturalism**

While applauded by some as “a natural and logical extension of the civil rights revolution that was sweeping Canada at the time” (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 19)\(^\text{25}\), critiques of multiculturalism surfaced despite official policies stating every citizen had “equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability” (Dewing, 2009). Thus the “criticism of multiculturalism is as old as multiculturalism itself” (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014, p. 52). Even the 1982 enshrinement of official multiculturalism as policy in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and its subsequent fine tuning through *Canadian Multicultural Act* of 1985 did not, and has not stopped multiculturalism’s detractors as national and global contexts continue to exert demands on policy.

For example, from its inception, many French Canadians have felt the multicultural “bargain” reached was covertly a means to sabotage claims to their historically unique status as an ethnic group capable of self-governance (Uberoi, 2009). The language concessions were seen as tokenistic at best and geared to thwart the larger goal of containing *Quebecois* claims to sovereignty (Wong & Guo, 2015). In

\(^{25}\) Will Kymlicka (2015) cites “liberalizing abortion laws, access to contraception, and divorce laws, abolishing the death penalty, prohibiting gender and religious discrimination, decriminalizing homosexuality, amongst many other such reforms” (p. 15) as part of the trend of civil rights.
addition, Indigenous activists have pointed to the lack of consultation given aboriginal peoples in devising multicultural policy as it largely circumvents Canada’s unresolved colonial legacy (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2012). Indigenous activists insist the hyper-focus on cultural diversity of the nation distracts from the ongoing, unresolved issues such as the devastation wrought by residential schooling, unaddressed land claims issues, and lack of representation in self-governance. Similarly, people of color and allies have been vocal about multiculturalism’s lack of focus on systemic racism in education and other social institutions throughout the nation state (Dei, 2007; Henry 2012; Kallen, 2004). It is argued that multiculturalism’s celebratory focus on food, dance, fashion, and discourse of equity and accommodation serves to further entrench the dominance of whiteness (Hikido & Murray, 2016). At the same time, the political right has claimed that multiculturalism fails to provide any incentive to integration, creates ethnic-nationalism among different groups, and turns people into political tools for cultural lobbyists (D’Souza, 1991; Bissoondath, 2002). In recent times, the “death of multiculturalism” (Wright, et al., 2012) discourses have moved to position the term itself as an invitation to anti-Western values and danger in the form of radicalized Islamists from the Middle East, Mexican drug lords, and “fake” refugees from African nations. “Diversity is perversity” (Savage, 2002, p. 19) discourses have been taken up by some conservatives to implicate multiculturalism as politically correct nonsense that foments “reverse racism” which victimizes white citizens.

The history of multiculturalism as “official” policy through the Canadian Multicultural Act (Willinisky, 2012) cannot be divorced from the practices which sustain multiculturalism in the present. Therefore, multiculturalism is addressed in the remainder of the chapter as a continual process of interaction between “government-sanctioned policies of multiculturalism and ‘on-the-streets’ or everyday multiculturalism of the people, without universalizing either of these versions” (Dudek, 2006, p. 3). For example, nationally, June 27th is official Multicultural Day, and even Canada’s birthday (July 1st) is marked by celebrations of diversity across the nation involving eating food, dressing up, listening to music, and waving flags. However, I argue that these multicultural practices have some connection to the ways participants perform their identities through bodies, actions, thoughts, and behaviors bridging the
past and the present. In the remainder of the chapter, I turn to how participants are affected by multicultural discourse which precede their present by asking: In what ways are multicultural norms reiterated, resisted, and re-signified by Sikh youth? What practices sustain the relevance of multicultural discourses? How is the process of subjection affected through various multicultural discourses? What impact do these understandings have on subjectivities and identities?

**Sikh Youth, Subjection, and the Multicultural Imaginary**

Dally: Multiculturalism is definitely positive. I enjoy learning about other cultures. Learning their culture is a lot easier than learning someone's religion. It's easier to get in touch with others’ cultures because it's all fun and games. It's the food, the different clothes they wear, the bhangra and all that fun and games…It's easier for people outside specific communities to go to cultural events and just have fun. Last week they had the Taiwanese parade thing and I was there. I walked by and tried the food. I go to these things and enjoy. When I have to learn religion, it's boring and a bit harder. It's like where are you getting this from? Culturally, we've always embraced that in Canada, and it's much easier. Even my parents would go (to the parade). We have Filipino neighbors and we have conversations and learn about each other all the time.

Raree: Growing up I had so many friends who were multicultural. It’s a different mentality. From Caucasian, to brown, to Chinese, to Spanish. I remember being at Christian dinners and saying (Christian) prayers… I mean when I look back, those people I hung out with who are multicultural, they helped really shape me. New perspectives, newer thinking at a young age, that's so profound. That’s what equality is about.

Sim: Multiculturalism means that *they* let in more than one religion, that *they* respect the other religions as well. It’s not like how before it might be all British people saying “we aren’t going to let you South Asians in”. I feel like all cultures are welcome here.

Dally, Raree, and Sim’s understanding are not carbon copies of each other, but they do use words such as “fun”, “profound”, and “welcome” to describe what multiculturalism means to them. This suggests that although they each speak to multiculturalism in slightly different ways, certain similarities are evident. It
could be suggested that these three participants exhibit reverence for multiculturalism, and all look fondly upon their experiences within the multicultural imaginary. In this section I explore the discourses contributing to participants’ subjection within the multicultural imaginary through interrogating their language, thoughts, actions, and practices alongside their silences, complicities, and contradictions.

**Performing “Normative” Multiculturalism:**

In Dally’s discussion about multiculturalism, he relishes the “fun and games” of learning about other cultures. For Dally, learning takes place through cultural events and exchanges which take place frequently in the Lower Mainland such as the “Taiwanese parade thing”, and having conversations with Filipino neighbours. These everyday multicultural contexts and spaces of interaction are central to how Dally practices and thinks of multiculturalism through what bodies are doing (dancing), making (food), and wearing (Harris, 2009; Wise, 2010; Wise & Velayutham, 2010). In these “mundane encounters of everyday life” (Ho, 2011, p. 604), Dally recognizes who the multicultural “other” is through “taking in” the fashion, dance, and food of the “other” while simultaneously recognizing his identity as a Sikh. In a way, Dally has to reify ethnonormative differences as essences (Aly, 2015) to demarcate “Taiwanese” from “Filipinos” as the foundation through which he comes to recognize these groups. Thus, Dally’s understanding of multiculturalism appears to be based on pleasant, non-confrontational, pedagogical cultural exchanges based on valuing diversity, and celebrating different communities while reiterating who belongs to those communities. As Dally states, “we've always embraced *that* in Canada”, and celebrating cultures is “a lot easier than learning someone’s religion”. Religion as a category of difference appears to be either too taboo, confusing, or controversial for Dally even though he is a baptized Sikh male who wears a turban and beard. However, later in the same interview he admits, “Now, when I go to the States, like down south, they don't say anything, but they all stare. I was in Vegas last year and I got constant stares” at his turban and beard. Therefore, Dally is not unaware of negative attitudes against people of color who wear outward religious symbols on their bodies, but finds these conversations difficult to have in the context of speaking to multiculturalism in Canada (Ali, 2008; Guo, 2015; Perry, 2010).
Raree shares similar positive feelings about multiculturalism. He refers to multiculturalism as a state of being, or “mentality” which affects one’s epistemological outlook. Raree’s understanding of “multicultural” is not just a lens through which subjects might understand the society they live in, but is also used to describe specific friends from various ethno-racial backgrounds such as Caucasian, brown, Chinese, Spanish, and Christian. Here, Raree indicates that race, ethnicity, and religion are intertwined aspects which informs what he thinks falls in line with “multicultural” as a descriptor. This is significant as these categories in their interrelation form his understanding of a multicultural society and are not easily isolatable. Raree, like Dally, cites everyday contexts such as meeting with “multicultural friends”, sharing food, and doing prayers together as important practices which enhance a multicultural way of living. His nostalgia about living among multicultural “others” as a child has a “profound” influence on his ideas about “equality” and “new perspectives, newer thinking at a young age”. In addition, when questioned about racism in multicultural Canada, Raree states, “I say that's false. You gotta take ownership for your own life in that regard. You can't just clump things together. I'm sure there are different races and structures... It's just those people that, you know, take accountability for their lives make progress”. The benefits of multiculturalism are its transformative abilities in respectfully bringing people together in sharing cultural knowledge, which inspires new types of thinking and learning. For Raree, it appears that inequalities and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion are not significant issues because of the fairness and equity inherent in intercultural exchanges. Or if racism is spoken about, it is not significant enough to have any effect on people who “take ownership” and “accountability” for their lives.

Sim indicates agreement with Dally and Raree on the benefits of multiculturalism from a national perspective by acknowledging “all cultures are welcome here” (Canada), and religions can be assured “respect”. There is also a sense of safety in her assurance that things today are not like they were “before” when the “British” had the authority to declare “we aren’t going to let you South Asians in”. Sim is referring to the 1914 incident when the Japanese steamship, Komagata Maru, was denied entry into Vancouver because of racist immigration policies which sought to prevent certain racialized groups from
entering British Columbia (Hickman, 2014). Of the 376 Indian citizens of the British Empire on board the vessel, the vast majority were Sikhs. Sim’s knowledge of this historic incident shows she can contextualize multiculturalism between the negative experiences Sikhs had in past with a present that she feels is very different. In Sim’s conversation about multiculturalism’s present there is respect and equality among citizens from different cultural and religious backgrounds who live in close proximity with each other. It is suggested that things are better now and that issues of racism have been overcome in part due to an acceptance of diversity as a normative aspect of Canadian multiculturalism.

**Subjection and Normative Multiculturalism**

Dally, Raree, and Sim use words such as “respect”, “equality”, “welcome”, “fun and games” and “learning” about others to describe their perceptions of multiculturalism. They are also invested in “doing” multiculturalism through embodied actions such as participating in events of a Taiwanese parade, having dinner with Christian friends, having the “feeling” of being welcome, and sharing cultural exchanges with Filipino neighbors. These multicultural discourses align with neoliberal conceptions of society being based on equality, freedom, personal responsibility for happiness, and consumer choice (Roberts & Mahanti, 2010). In a sense, race, ethnicity, and religion are simultaneously made visible through public spectacles and respectful sharing, but made invisible if used as grounds to question unequal power relations in society. Therefore, the ability to work hard, get along, and respect differences are not negative in and of themselves, but if notions of meritocracy erase marginalized groups’ ability to identify racism as a significant force, it becomes a mechanism for cultivating citizens to disregard structural discrimination in favor of a color-blind society. As Davis (2007) states:

> For in a neoliberal society, individuals are supposedly freed from identity and operate under the limiting assumptions that hard work will be rewarded if the game is played according to the rules. Consequently, any impediments to success are attributed to personal flaws. This attribution affirms notions of neutrality and silences claims of racializing and racism. (p. 350)

Dally, Raree, and Sim’s reiteration of neoliberal discourses of multiculturalism might be considered a citation of common sense understandings of the term in Canadian society. The power of these discourses
not only contours thoughts, actions, and ideas around being and living a multicultural life that Raree, Dally, and Sim share, but also intimates the workings of power in producing, managing, and controlling subjects (Foucault, 1990; 1991). In other words, the way Dally, Raree, and Sim perform multiculturalism in the present is connected with prior iterations of the concept, and how they “have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) multiculturalism in Canada.

Although potential slippages and insurrections are possible (this will be discussed below), Dally, Raree, and Sim are subject to the regulatory effects of power evident in the maintenance of what has been variously termed neo-liberal, celebratory, or pluralist multiculturalism as the normative discursive system of ethno-racial regulation in Canada (Bannerji, 2000; Fleras, 2009; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Kymlicka, 2010; Wood & Gilbert 2005; Wright, 2012). Normative multiculturalism advocates for discourses about “how Canadians should live and interact within a pluralistic society, valuing diversity and being tolerant, respectful and non-discriminatory” (Nagra & Peng, 2013, p. 607). Therefore, through their actions cited above, Dally, Raree, and Sim are invested in notions of equity, diversity, and respect as repetitions of normative multiculturalism and associated practices. In this vein, Foucault (1972), reminds “there is no knowledge (discourse) without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms” (Foucault, 1972, p. 183). Therefore, knowledge produced is not to be considered “literally as a “truth”, but attempts to establish what is “within the true” (Foucault, 1972, p. 224) in a given historical moment. In this specific “historical moment”, Dally, Raree, and Sim appear to reiterate a normative multicultural discourse which stresses tolerance, accommodation, fairness, equity, and color-blindness circulating through Canadian society (Kymlicka, 2009).

**Things Said and Not Said: Whiteness and Normative Multiculturalism**

Within Dally, Raree, and Sim’s understandings of multiculturalism, what is said, named, and advocated for is also marked by what is hinted at, suggested, or ignored. One of the omissions which has

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26 In order to reduce confusion, from this point forward I rely on “normative multiculturalism” as a way to both harness the various labels used to describe multiculturalism and to recognize the importance of norms within performativity.
been touched on above is the avoidance of addressing racism and religious discrimination within multiculturalism. Raree states that racism simply is not a factor to be considered, while Dally focuses on celebrations of cultures over difficult conversations around religious beliefs. While their attitudes on these matters are productive in constituting their subjection within normative multicultural discourses, the same understandings regulate issues, topics, and new directions that multiculturalism could potentially be pushed to address. The failure to address the possibility of racism and religious discrimination are significant because they show “relations and operations of power” (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011, p. 145) which are “reiterated in the subject’s “own” acting” (Butler, 1997, p. 14) are tied to normative discourses already circulating within the Canadian multicultural imaginary. Thus, the reiterated regulatory power of normative multiculturalism’s makes overt talk of racism and racial privilege unintelligible within its framework for Dally, Raree, and Sim.

For example, when Raree speaks to eating dinners with “multicultural friends”, respectfully participating in “Christian prayers”, and that he is “shaped” by these practices he could be making reference to his constitution within normative multiculturalism discourses. Interestingly, he does not refer to his “Christian” friends partaking in or learning Sikh prayers as a part of multiculturalism. One possible reading of this fact is that Raree simply omitted the many instances where his “Christian” friends learned and participated in Sikh prayers at dinners with “multicultural friends”. Another possibility is that “Christian” stands as euphemism for the discursive authority of whiteness in regards to multicultural matters without having to name whiteness. Perhaps Raree does not “come to know” multiculturalism as being about Sikh prayers or speaking Punjabi in meaningful ways because normative multiculturalism establishes hierarchies where ethno-racial subjects are secondary to an unchallenged, normative whiteness (Leonardo, 2011; Matias 2016; Thomas, 2011). If this is the case, it could be considered that the “cultural ethnocentrism that hides behind multiculturalism to legitimate its dominance” (Sriskandarajah, 2008, p. 177) reproduces whiteness in daily living through its invisibility within normative multicultural discourses.
Sim’s vocabulary of “respect” and “welcoming” echo Dally and Raree’s thoughts on multiculturalism. However, there is something different about Sim’s account in that she twice refers to a “they” who “let in more than one religion”, and “respect other religions” in Canada. She follows the unspecified “they” with speaking directly to the “British” who in the past determined which racialized groups were allowed into Canada. Even if things in the present are not like the past when the British were the gatekeepers, it is interesting that Sim intimates that there is still a gatekeeping function to be filled within multicultural Canada. The question arises as to why some form of multicultural regulation is a part of the way Sim understands multiculturalism, and who or what exactly is the “they” she imagines performing the regulatory function. Is the “they” other Sikhs, members of Chinese community, Indigenous peoples, or a mix of subjects from multiple backgrounds?

Sim is not alone in her acquiescence to a multicultural authority. This form of multicultural regulation was mentioned earlier in this chapter in reference to Ishar’s warning to Sikhs, “Just don’t be too crazy”. I argue that the phrase “don’t be too crazy”, and Sim expression of a “they” emerge in the context which conceals the unnamed ethno-racial power relations within normative multiculturalism. That is, for Sim and Ishar the avoidance of addressing whiteness (Ali, 2008; Castagno, 2009), and by extension ignoring institutionalized racism, might be read as a by-product or material effect of normative multicultural discourses they have been subjected by (Fleras, 2014; Henry, 2012; Nagra & Peng, 2013). By circumventing a critical analysis of how whiteness informs multiculturalism through its invisibility (Leonardo, 2009; Yancy, 2012), “national identity still tends to equal a dominant white ethnicity that tolerates and even celebrates the co-presence of ethnic Others who accede to its ‘values’ and accept its hegemony” (Harris, 2009, p. 188-189) across Western nations (Fleras, 2014; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Nagra & Peng, 2013; Razak, Smith, & Thobani, 2010; Tastsoglou & Petrinioti, 2015). The contradictory nature of an inclusivity based on the simultaneous “respect” and “regulation” of racial, religious, and ethnic “others” is what makes normative multiculturalism both productive and constraining for participants such as Sim and Ishar.
Sim’s “they” might also be read as a slippage or a misfiring in reiterating normative multiculturalism and thus exposing the authority and privilege of whiteness without outright naming. As Butler (1997a) instructs, the possibility of resistance and resignifications of discourses happen in the space of imperfect recitation of previously established norms. Perhaps while Sim praises multiculturalism for being welcoming, her use of “they” opens the potential for multiculturalism to be critically questioned, moved in different directions, and brought to account for that which is ignored or silenced. Therefore, it might be possible for a new type of multicultural understanding through the contradictions which surface in participants’ unfaithful repetition of discourses within the multicultural imaginary.

**Normalizing Nice: The Grass is not Greener on the Other Side**

Nav: Multiculturalism in Canada is nice because it is about people from all over the world meeting in one place. I think the more educated you are about others, the more you know, and the more accepting you become. I think there will be less racism. I think that is the problem with America. They are for assimilation.

Nav reiterates some of the comments made by other participants in this chapter which portray Canada as a place “where people from all over the world” come together. Like Raree and Dally, Nav states that being more “educated” about “others” is a precursor to acceptance of a “nice” type of diversity (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ahmed, 2009). Although she does not state what Canada’s paradigm for multiculturalism is, she intuits non-offensive, tolerance based experiences of respect and acceptance of the others. Put differently, Nav’s comments allows for everyday multiculturalism’s focus on knowledge and cultural exchanges as part of an initiative of “respecting the presence of others” (Ho, 2011, p. 614) to be elaborated. For example, Nav comments on Canadian exceptionalism as she feels multiculturalism is “accepting” and the reason for “less racism”. This “happy talk” (Bell & Hartmann, 2007) about living in a condition of harmony and acceptance is in accordance with normative multiculturalism which paints a positive picture of Canada as a tolerant society.

In addition, Nav’s shares her opinion about multiculturalism in the United States by stating “they are for assimilation” and that “is the problem with America”. Here, Nav shares her negative perception of
American multiculturalism which she assumes is “more racist” than Canada. This type of contrasting of perceptions and experiences between the United States and Canada was also brought up earlier in this chapter as Dally commented on feeling uncomfortable in “Vegas” because of the stares he receives as a turban wearing Sikh male (which he states happens less in Vancouver). To this point, Nav and Dally are not alone. For instance, when asked directly about multiculturalism in Canada Arman, a turban wearing Sikh says, “Keep it. I love the fact that in Vancouver you don't feel like you are being as judged as you are in the States. Even when I cross the border, it's weird, but I get a different vibe”. He also claims that when he travels to the United States by air, “Every time on American airlines (as in not a Canadian airline such as Air Canada) I've been randomly selected, put in a box, and had my pug (turban) swabbed”.

The contrast between the United States and Canada presented by Nav, Dally, and Arman is also reiterated by Mole:

Mole: “I saw on the (American) news there was a Sikh man beaten on transit because people thought he was Osama Bin Laden's brother or something. Just because he was wearing a turban. I feel like Canadians do label us, but they don't take it out on us as much as Americans do”.

These examples show the persistent comparison participants make between Canadian and American versions of multiculturalism. Yet what function might comparing and contrasting Canada and the United States in regards to multiculturalism perform? Why do participants share these contrasts and what relation might these contrast have to normative multicultural discourses they are subjected by?

Nav, Dally, Arman, and Mole identify Canada as being “less racist”, and feel being not as “judged” in Canada. However, this is not the same as saying racism does not exist, or ignoring racism altogether as other participants have. Therefore, the words of participants could be read as communicating that racism is a factor in Canada, yet it might be overlooked because of events in, and their perceptions about the United States. Perhaps because these participants travel to and from the United States to play sports, visit relatives, and act as tourists, they are particularly aware of certain incidents that have occurred in the United States in regards to Sikh bodies. For example, when Mole states that “Canadians do label us, but they don't take it out on us as much as Americans do” she is referring to the beating of a
Sikh man in the United States she saw on television news. Yet she still feels “labelled” in Canada. Similarly, when Dally and Arman speak about feeling uneasy, overly judged, or being nervous about being “swabbed” unnecessarily in airports or stared at, it might be because they think of the United States as a place where safety is compromised for Sikhs. This is not an unfounded assumption. Since 9-11, American Sikhs have been targets of over a 1000 hate crimes including Sikh temple desecrations, vandalisms of businesses and homes, school bullying, assaults, and murders as documented by the legal group Sikh Coalition (Sikh Coalition, 2018). As a result, American Sikhs have taken to public pedagogical initiatives through development of pamphlets, posters, and placing American flags on their homes in order to display their patriotism to other Americans (Verma, 2006; Birk, Gill & Heer, 2015). Still, acts of aggression and violence have caused obvious anxiety and fear throughout various Sikh communities in the United States (Ahluwalia & Pelletiere, 2010; Sian, 2013; Birk, et al.) and some participants in this study are aware of these circumstances, or have felt racialized in the United States.

As negative circumstances in the United States continue to be made sense of by Sikh youth in Canada, it appears to fuel discourses which portray the United States as a “problem” and Canada as “nice”. The consequences of this relationship might contribute to the reiteration of normative multicultural discourses about tolerance, equity, and acceptance in Canada. By this I mean that if American examples are repeatedly referred to as amongst the worst of multicultural interactions by participants, the benevolent Canadian model stands out more as beacon of hope to youth. However, it could be argued that celebrating Canadian multiculturalism because of what is “wrong” in the United States only reifies normative multicultural “niceness” which leaves out a critical examination of racism and whiteness in Canada. This could be the case for Mole, Nav, and Arman who acknowledge the negative feelings of racialization in Canada, but are constantly comparing their situation with one that is purported to be perpetually worse in the United States. Thus, unequal ethno-racial power relations addressed by participants could be ignored because of a hyper-focus on events outside of the country. Perhaps some participants’ subjection within normative multicultural discourses makes issues of racism
and the power of whiteness secondary to the reiteration of colorblind equity, and personal accountability in multicultural Canada.

**Resignification of Normative Multiculturalism**

Mole: If we're from Canada, multiculturalism does matter by region. So it's like living in Vancouver where now people are so accepting. They are not as accepting as we think they should be, especially white people. Maybe in twenty years there will be more multiculturalism.

Anand: I feel like we live in a real multicultural society, but that doesn't mean racism doesn't exist…You'll go out anywhere and you'll see it. So we were going to the States, me and my family. We have the Nexus pass, and we were going through the Nexus lane and it's one of those stat holidays where everyone is going to the States. There is another car that's trying to get in the lane and they are like, “oh you probably don't have Nexus, go back to your own country”. It's like, what are you saying. This is my country and not just your country. I was born here.

Participant advocacy for discourses of respect, equality, tolerance, acceptance and learning about “others” show the traits that allow for normative multiculturalism to continue to flourish. This “nice” version of multiculturalism either ignores, or might allude to the authority of whiteness and the presence of racism within Canadian society, but does not offer any sustained critique. However, the fact that I have spoken about a “normative multiculturalism” does not mean that this is the only discourse available in making sense of multiculturalism. Instead it is an the entry point into a larger conversation about the identification process for Sikh youth in the Lower Mainland and how this process is marked by contradictions and new possibilities that exist for ethno-racial subjects within the multicultural imaginary. It is important to note that participant reiterations of normative multiculturalism and questioning its authority are not a part of a binary system. The multicultural imaginary is rife with inconsistencies and contradictions which allow for participants such as Mole to both praise and critique normative multiculturalism through statements such as “now people are so accepting” and “they are not as accepting as we think they should be” sequentially after each other. The contradiction might be understood as part of the negotiation of multicultural discourses which shape her subjectivities.
On the surface, Mole’s declaration that “white people” are not as accepting is problematic on several levels. First, it could be surmised that Mole essentializes “white people” as being intrinsically, “not as accepting” which is something she finds frustrating when directed at her community. For example, when speaking about essentialization of Sikhs, Mole laments, “they think we are all the same kind of people. Terrorist, or we kill people in the streets”. Second she leaves out the ways she has been marginalized within her community and by other people of color because she did not live up to various norms which will be discussed in the next chapter. But what does stand out in Mole’s quote as being different than Dally and Raree’s praise of multiculturalism, and Sim’s praise yet acknowledging a regulatory “they”, is how Mole moves to calling out what she thinks is “not as accepting as we think they should be”. Although it appears Mole is discussing individual “white people”, her comments could be interpreted as speaking about a “discursive white society” she lives in.

Mole’s critique is important to show she does not fully accept the ideals of normative multiculturalism. This kind of critique could be read as Mole’s challenging of whiteness and a “(re)appropriation by counter-hegemonic” (Mills, 2000, p. 269) multicultural discourses which advocate for a concern of inequality within multiculturalism. The re-signifying of normative multiculturalism to confront white supremacy is “precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhibit a coherent identity to become a coherent subject” (Butler, 1997, p. 86). When Mole expresses her desire that “Maybe in twenty years there will be more multiculturalism”, her “more” suggests making whiteness more visible and confronting inequality as a part of a new norm within multiculturalism. Interestingly, her call for “more multiculturalism” shows she does not want to get rid of the concept, but instead indicates she is fully invested in multiculturalism as an important part of her identification. In this way, Mole could be desiring to push multiculturalism to be more critical of racism and the discursive authority of whiteness in the society she lives in.

Anand goes a step further than Mole and speaks to racism in conjunction with multiculturalism. She foregoes phrases such as “less accepting” and “they”, and bluntly states that just because you live in a multicultural society, “doesn't mean racism doesn't exist…You'll go out anywhere and you'll see it”.
Anand’s sharing about her families drive to the Canadian/US border and having passengers in a nearby car yelling “go back to your own country” appears to be an act of individual racism (Essed, 1991). Yet the performative aspect of racism (yelling discriminatory words out a car window) is a repetition of discourses which precede the actual saying and hearing of the words. What is being cited by the “racist” is that a family of Sikhs, regardless if they were “born here”, are not a part of “normal” Canadian society. Or at the very least, perhaps they are only contingently Canadian depending on how they are performing their identities.

The incident with the “racist” might have been exacerbated by the fact that Anand’s family are baptized Sikhs who wear visible symbols of the faith. Her father covers his head with a turban and wears his beard long and open. The family also wears visible kirpans (ceremonial daggers worn across the body). Maybe the “racist’s” attempt to injure could be read as discomfort with boundaries of tolerance being violated by Anand’s family’s religious performance as purposefully anti-assimilation. Non-normative religious displays on bodies of color might be deemed unappreciative, obstinate, dangerous, or in excess of the norms of diversity of Western societies (Ahmed, 2009). What is interesting is that in Anand’s narrative, the “racist” and Anand both draw on discourse outside normative multiculturalism purview of respect, acceptability, and “niceness”. By this I mean that both the “racist” and Anand are communicating their beliefs without worrying about offending, or being “accepted/nice” although in radically different directions. Anand is overtly calling out racism within a multicultural society, and the “racist” is explicitly showing disdain for ethno-racial differences. This could means the latent discourses within the multicultural imaginary do not simply offer progressive critiques of multiculturalism which interrogate racism in society, but also offer more overtly racist alternatives which could place racialized bodies at further risk (Fleras, 2014). Nonetheless, Mole and Anand’s conversations represent participant narratives that begin to overtly call out what they feel are intrinsic deficits of normative multiculturalism, while still showing no indication that they are beyond multiculturalism as a general concept.

Anand: Multiculturalism just has to be a trade-off. People have to be open. So if Asians sing a song in a different language, or say Muslims pray at school, don’t just say nothing. Say “good
job!” ...Like racism is everywhere but you should always do something about it by saying “good job” to people who do multicultural things. I tell Sikh people they should act out all your culture stuff for everyone to see so it is really just normal everywhere. Being scared won’t help you in the end. I keep my hair long and go to the gurudwara (temple) and pray. My parents taught me how to play the baja (piano type instrument) at home, and I even played it for my class one day. I’m not going to be shy about that.

In Anand’s discussion about multiculturalism, she implores people to “do”, and “not” do certain actions. Her suggestions are for people to “do something”; “to be open”; to “go” places; and to “play” while she also says to “not be shy”, and to not stay silent. Specifically, Anand advocates for bodies to actively “do” parts of their identities as multicultural subjects. For example, Anand performs certain Sikh practices such as keeping her hair long and uncut, playing the baja, and participates in prayers at the gurudwara. She also wants others to express their identities in ways they see fit bridging private/public binaries by “act(ing) out all your culture stuff for everyone to see”. Anand’s advocacy for what might be called a “loud and proud” display of her Sikh identity is tied to her understanding of what it means to be a multicultural person “doing multicultural things”. Her forthrightness could be read as a demand for recognition by insisting that differences in the form of speaking different languages, praying in school, wearing hair long and untrimmed, and singing Punjabi hymns are important actions. Exactly what constitutes a multicultural act is not defined, but it can be inferred from her comments on Asians singing, and Muslims praying that she associates multicultural acts as being done by other racialized subjects.

According to Anand, it is not enough for a “multicultural act” to occur, but it must be visible to others, and openly appreciated by others who should say “good job”. Implicated in Anand’s statement is to be overt about one’s racial, ethnic, or religious heritage because being “shy”, ashamed, or “scared” to perform one’s identity “will not help you in the end”. By not helping “in the end”, Jasmine might be referring to the fact that full acceptance into a normative multicultural society is impossible for Sikhs anyways, so avoidance of one’s ethno-racial practices in public is a zero sum gain.
Anand’s theorizing about multiculturalism makes clear that racism must be recognized within the multicultural imaginary and “you should always do something about it”. To make this call for action in regards to racism, Anand differs from many of the participants in this chapter who ignore, deny, or reduce the significance of racism in Canada by referring to the much worse United States. Instead, Anand might be read as attempting to undo whiteness through offering an anti-racist agenda to the current status of normative multiculturalism (Henry, 2012). This multicultural challenge is in obvious contrast with Nav’s earlier reliance on the term “nice” to describe a multiculturalism, or Dally and Raree’s celebration and acceptance of others. It is also a step further than simply complementing Canada for being “less racist”, and “welcoming” despite a tacit recognition of a regulatory authority who polices which ethno-racial groups are welcome. In saying that “racism is everywhere”, Anand appears to be interrogating the discursive force of whiteness as being endemic to multiculturalism in a colonial settler society (Hage, 1998; Bannerji, 2000; Sriskandarajah, 2008; Thobani, 2007). Anand’s desire for multiculturalism to be something more becomes possible as critiques, questions, and expectations might establish a new multicultural agenda which could challenge the hegemony of normative multiculturalism within the Canadian multicultural imaginary.

Conclusion

As a contested discourse with its own normative iterations, multiculturalism is an important concept utilized by participants which affects their own identity claims. Some of the participant narratives in this chapter indicate that in performing their Sikh identities they reiterate normative multicultural discourses of equality, tolerance, color-blindness, meritocracy, getting along, accommodation of difference, and avoiding serious talk about institutionalization of racism in society. However, as other participants have shown, they demand more from multiculturalism by overtly addressing racism, deconstructing the dominance of whiteness, and opening spaces of recognition of ethno-racial identities beyond celebrations. Therefore, multiple discourses are at play in the multicultural imaginary with unpredictable results. The material effects of these discourses performed through reiterative practices
allude to the importance of subjection in multicultural societies and the ongoing struggle for ethno-racial youth who are constituted within discourses.

Peekay: I think we should keep multiculturalism for the next little while. I mean, I don't know. In 10 to 20 years from now I don't know where we're gonna be as a country or what we'll need. But we have to do it now. Things aren't set yet. There is actually more racism now I think than before.

One things is clear, participants are not ready to move on from the concept of multiculturalism. Peekay reiterates this point as she feels that because “things are not set” in regards to racism “we have to do it (multiculturalism) now”. Peekay suggests “doing” multiculturalism in the present is important because it becomes some form of antidote to a more pernicious form of racism which she thinks is escalating in the present in contrast to an unspecified past. Presumably, there might be a time when the multicultural training wheels could potentially come off and Canada will evolve into a nation which no longer needs it. In the meantime, “the awkward resilience of multiculturalism” (Wright, 2013) continues to be important in the ways Sikh youth such as Peekay understand their own identities.

Regardless of “what we will need” in the “future”, ethno-racial subjects will continue to make sense of power relations which inform difference in contemporary societies. In other words, recognition of a range of ethno-racial others and one’s own identity remains a central concern of multicultural living. Coming to know, or recognizing “others”, is also rife with competing discourses about various diverse bodies. Sorting through these meanings in the process of identification requires some organizing and positioning of difference. In the next chapter, I turn to addressing the ways Sikh youth come to know their own identities within an array of ethno-racial difference, and how these understandings open and foreclose the ways they perform their identities within what I term multicultural frames of recognition.
CHAPTER 4

Multicultural Frames of Recognition

The subject is constructed through acts of differentiation that distinguish the subject from its constitutive outside, a domain of abjected alterity conventionally associated with the feminine, but clearly not exclusively (Butler, 1995, p. 12).

“it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term—and thus its 'identity'—can be constructed” (Hall, 2000, p. 17).

In the previous chapter it was argued that multiculturalism, as a contested discourse, has evolved into a normative referent, or “placeholder” (Thomas, 2011, p. 31) in how youth negotiate, reiterate, and embody their individual and collective identities in the multicultural imaginary. The multicultural imaginary was discussed not as a static entity, but rather a space of contestation between various competing understandings of multiculturalism and how these understandings become a part of everyday, embodied social knowledge about the self and the “other” (McCabe, 2011). The focus of this chapter is the self/other relationship which is also central to Judith Butler and Stuart Hall’s line of inquiry in the quotes above. These scholars offer an opportunity to think through how the process of subjection informs both who subjects think they are, and the “constitutive outside” which “emerges at the limits of intelligibility” (Butler, 2004, p. 74). In this chapter, I am interested in how subjects come to recognize the “other” who is “outside” to them, and how the “inside” of identity might be constituted. What follows will be a discussion about how and why discursive boundaries between the self and “other” are opened and foreclosed in the process of identification, and how differences between the self and “other” are framed in relation to the ways participants perform their own identities.

The discursive construction of the “constitutive outside” is “not exclusively” marked by the imposition of gender norms, but are open to many “regimes of regulatory production” (Butler, 1993, p. 17). These “regimes of regulatory production” open spaces to investigate how gender “is also and always a racial industry, indeed, [it is] the reiterated practice of racializing interpellations” (Butler, 1993, p. 18).
and *vice versa*. Therefore, the apprehension of difference between individual subjects and “others” can be taken up as a multifaceted process where the significance of gender, racial, ethnic, and religious citational practices might contingently surface in novel forms of identification (Butler, 2004a). In the remainder of the chapter I look to the ways Sikh youth negotiate multiple-multicultural “others” by asking: How might difference in multicultural societies be theorized by participants? How do Sikh youth recognize those identities which represent racial, ethnic, religious, and gender difference? What difference does difference make in the ways Sikh youth perform their identities?

**Who is the “Other”?**

Nav: This one Filipino guy (at school) says to me all the time “you probably eat *roti* (flatbread) three times a day every single day”. I barely eat *roti*, but *they* eat rice every day or something.

Kal: You travel to India a lot. So what is the difference between Sikh kids here and there?

Mole: First of all we have white washed accents when we speak Punjabi. *They* can tell where we are from.

Nav: They try too hard to act cool or something. Like western. *They* are just so weird. Like our cousins in India try too hard. My cousin has this jacket (from Canada). He thinks he is so cool when he wears it, I don’t know (laughing).

Kal: Do you think certain groups in Canada get it worse than others? Which cultural groups do you feel have the hardest time or worst image?

Nav: I think it’s us. From the outside world I think it’s us. Like *they* think we are all the same kind of people. Terrorist or we kill people in the streets.

Mole: White people think that all Indians are the same kind of Indians. Like in America, my friend has it really different. She is Muslim. That’s the biggest thing there…I saw on the (American) news there was a Sikh man beaten on transit because people thought he was Osama Bin Laden's brother or something. Just because he was wearing a turban. I feel like Canadians do label *us*, but they don’t take it out on *us* as much as Americans do”.
Nav: Yeah, my cousin and aunt and uncle that live in New York, they feel they are victims of racism because of the whole 9-11 thing.

In my conversation with Nav and Mole, they communicate thoughts about various ethno-racial differences in regards to “Filipinos”, “Sikhs”, “Punjabis”, “Muslims”, “Canadian”, and “white” “others”. What is significant about this array of difference is that Nav and Mole are not content with speaking about differences in one specific way. Instead, both participants weave in and out of making sense of multiple “others” in relation to their own identities. For example, Nav and Mole’s understanding of differences such as Indian Sikhs, Canadian Sikhs, Filipinos, Muslims, and “Canadians” (white?) suggests that they recognize “others”, “through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized” (Butler, 2009, pp. 3-4). At the same time, Nav and Mole speak about a “we” and “us” which suggests they imagine belonging to a group or ethno-racial community. This complicated process of continually conferring recognition upon various “others” and simultaneously making claims to belonging appears to have some ramifications for how the self and “other” are understood. Moreover, Mole and Nav evidence there is more than one way of making sense of differences in contexts where power-relations might produce various hierarchies, inequities, and marginalization.

Nav and Mole’s theorizing is important because it provides a possible platform for understanding how the complexity and contingency of difference might be understood in multicultural societies with consequences for how they perform their own identities. In order to address this complexity, I utilize the concept of “multicultural frames of recognition” (Butler, 2009) in order to make sense of three often interrelated types of difference already acknowledged by Mole and Nav: 1.) inter-group differences between Sikhs and a generalized discursive “whiteness” 2.) inter-group differences between Sikhs and other racialized communities, and 3.) intra-group discursive differences within self-identified Sikh communities. I am not suggesting these three frames can operate outside of each other. Instead they are discussed in regards to power relations through which their contingency might be brought into greater relief. In the remainder of the chapter, I explain Butler’s use of framing as it generally pertains to this
Frames of Recognition

Judith Butler (2009) uses the concept of “frames of recognition” (p. 3) in demonstrating how subjects themselves are affected by the discursive constitution of the “other”. Accordingly, it is through “frames of recognition” (Butler, 2009, p. 3), or the “epistemological problem raised by this issue of framing” (p. 1) that we come to recognize who the “other” is and can be, and also how we come to recognize ourselves within various contingencies (Butler, 1995). This “coming to know the other” is not devoid of material consequence for specific subjects. Instead it is through framing the self and other which allows for material effects of various discourses to be manifest and have unequal consequences for different bodies (which bodies matter, to what degree, in which institutions). Therefore, framing produces and reiterates discursive knowledge about the “other” so that they can be recognized which requires being “dominated by a power external to oneself” (Butler, 1997b, p. 2). This means “the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others… are themselves operations of power” (Butler, 2009, p. 1) which implicates and have consequences for the “self”. For example, Butler argues that although “there ought to be recognition of precariousness as a shared condition of human life” (Butler, 2009, p. 13), certain populations might be more susceptible to the material consequences of famine, disease, war, and displacement. Butler contends that these inconsistencies are consequences of how certain “others” are precariously framed in contrast to a less vulnerable norm, and thus can be “injurable, for instance, or (that it) can be lost, destroyed or neglected” (Butler, 2009, p. 13).

Exploring the contingent vacillation between difference that Mole and Nav evidence (whiteness, racialized others, and within the Sikh community) as important multicultural frames of recognition speaks to the links between relationality and recognisability. That is, a subject’s desire to be recognized and

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27 Butler uses “frames” to understand what makes a life grievable in the context of war. However, she does not set limits on how the concept “framing” is utilized in the production of the multiple ways of knowing, foreclosing, and affecting how subjects become recognizable to each other.
compulsion to recognize others is only possible in relation to an “other” (Butler, 2004b). This relation is informed by discourse which Nav and Mole are subjected by so they can recognize “Filipinos”, “Muslims”, and “Canadians” while recognizing themselves as Sikh. In addition, this relation is both “descriptive or historical fact of our formation, but also as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence” (Butler, 2004b, p. 27). Yet this interdependence is not of two subjects who recognize the self, and come to recognize the other as “truth”. Butler (1997b) explains we can never “fully know” the self or “other” because we are always outside of the discourses which constitute our subjection. It is worth quoting Butler at length on the topic of recognition:

Whether or not the other is singular, the other is recognized and confers recognition through a set of norms that govern recognisability. So, whereas the other may be singular, if not radically personal, the norms are to some extent impersonal and indifferent, and they introduce a disorientation of perspective for the subject in the midst of recognition as an encounter. If I understand myself to be conferring recognition on you, for instance, then I take seriously that the recognition comes from me. But the moment I realize that the terms by which I confer recognition when I offer recognition to you, which means the “I” is not offering this recognition from its own private resources. Indeed, it seems that the “I” is subjected to the norm at the moment it makes such an offering, so that the “I” becomes an instrument of norm’s agency. Thus the “I” seems invariably used by the norm to the degree that the “I” tries to use the norm. Though I thought I was having a relation to “you,” I find that I am caught up in a struggle with the norm. (Butler, 2005, pp. 25-26)

Just as Nav and Mole refer to an “us” and “we” while simultaneously pointing out a “they”, in this lengthy quote, Butler “explicitly locates the constitution of the individual subject within a relationship” (Teague, 2015, p. 403) with the “other”. Furthermore, frames of recognition are an integral “part of the mechanisms of power through which the subject, as a recognisable entity, is produced and sustained” (McQueen, 2015, p. 48), and stresses the temporal grounds through which both the self and “other” can
come to know, but never fully know each other within the scene of recognition. In this study this means that participants such as Nav and Mole can never fully give an account of an “I” as Sikhs, or fully know the “other” Filipinos, Canadians, and Muslims. Instead participants reiterate the norms which constitute these bodies through frames of recognition as they perform their own identities. Importantly, Nav and Mole’s conversation also shows that while norms are essential for a relationship to the “other”, recognition is also a form of violence committed against the “other”\textsuperscript{28}. For example, Nav’s statements that Filipinos “always eat rice”, that her Sikh cousins in India “try too hard”, and that she is unfairly deemed a “terrorist” by “Canadians” speaks to the way subjects might misrecognize, and can be misrecognized by others in certain contexts. In these circumstances, “recognition will then be experienced as a coercive imposition that undermines their own attempts at self-understanding” (McQueen, 2015, p. 50) which may also make life precarious for others (Butler, 2004b). This is because the possibility of misrecognition or lack of recognition are also tied to the discursive power of social norms, and thus affect subjectivities and identities.

It is important to note that frames of recognition are not static, predictable totalities, or universal ways of knowing and producing knowledge. Multicultural frames of recognition are open to contestation and resignification as subjects, through discursive agency (Butler, 1997a), alter and unmoor the foundations which frames attempt to secure (Butler, 1995). That a “certain leakage or contamination makes this process more fallible than it might at first appear” (Butler, 2009, p. 9) is inherent to multicultural frames of recognition and allows power “its own possibility of being reworked. We are within power and it is from this position that we resist power” (Hekman, 2014, p. 454). Reworking power is significant because taking up multicultural frames of recognition as “a site of rupture within the horizon of normativity…the normative horizon within which I see the other or, indeed, within which the other sees and listens and knows and recognizes” (Butler, 2005, p. 24), opens space for analyzing the

\textsuperscript{28} Violence for Butler is not always in reference to physical forms of violence such as assault and murder. Violence in a broader sense relates to the imposition of norms on others and the consequences of this imposition (Butler, 2004b).
ways inter-group differences emerge as important factors in shaping the subjectivities and identities of Sikh youth.

**Inter-group Frames of Recognition I: Whiteness**

Manny: True we live in a multicultural country. But we live in a white culture and we go to white schools.

Arman: It makes me sad, but whenever I'm out I sort of feel responsible to promote Sikhism or to be a good person so others will be like “oh that guys brown and he is really nice”. I feel responsible for the Sikh community when I'm going out. That’s why it makes me so angry when you see upanay (one of our people) doing dumb stuff.

Raree: No gora (white male) says Robert Pickton buried 10 hookers so I need to go out and be a good model for goray (white people). Like when Wisconsin 29 happened, I was like please don't let it be a Punjabi.

Arman: I feel that everywhere I go.

Manny, Arman, and Raree are three Sikh males in their earlier twenties. They were born and raised in the Lower Mainland, and at the time of this writing were pursuing post-secondary degrees. In our discussion about growing up in Vancouver and its suburbs, Manny shares that he knows he lives in a multicultural society, but feels that it is grounded in “white culture” and “white schools” 30. His choice in using the adjective “white” is instructive in how he understands his immediate surroundings. However, describing something as white can be read in different ways. One reading might be that Manny lives in a generalized location where he is a visible minority among a majority of white individuals. Even if this context changes from time to time (for example, many participants in this study describe attending high schools where white students were the minority), the general society he lives in has a statistical majority of people defined as being white. Another way to look at “white” is through power relations which would enable participants like Manny to associate white as part of a hierarchy in multicultural societies as opposed to

29 Referring to the Sikh temple shooting of August, 2012 (Thobani, 2012; Birk et al. 2015).
30 An extrapolated version of this quote will be analyzed in chapter 6.
individual white bodies. By this I mean that stating that one lives in a “white society” could be taken up through the various histories and practices which materialize to establish “white” as default norm which influences the way Manny and others might come to know the society they live in. For example, curriculum being taught which describes Western political thought and philosophies as the pinnacle of society, national religious celebration rooted in Judeo-Christian traditions, business signs in English only, laws which might discriminate against immigrants from specific parts of the world, lack of funding for investigating hate crimes against minorities, negative media portrayals of visible minorities, or differing incarcerations rates and durations for people of color all might potentially influence what “white society” could mean.

In this reading, whiteness as a constructed norm which shapes understandings of certain societies as “white” may not require white bodies to be a statistical majority or require white bodies at all (Bonilla-Silvia, 2003). Rather through societal institutions such as law, economics, sciences, media, and education certain practices construct and privilege those deemed as “white” in a disproportionate way as compared to people of color (Frankenberg, 1993; Leonardo, 2009, Castagno, 2013, Matias, 2016). Yet this begs the question, do all “white” people have privilege relative to people of color? Who falls into the category “white” and “people of color”, and who decides? Do all people of color have the same amount of “less privilege” in comparison to white people? Does privilege have the same benefit for all white people? Do people know when they are privileged or do they have to be told by someone else?

These questions cannot be fully answered in the space of this dissertation yet serve as an entry point in situating whiteness as a frame of recognition as advocated for within this study. I do not intend to essentialize whiteness as socially constructed force which acts consistently and unilaterally on subjects. Whiteness is also not meant to denote something that can be owned and used like a tool for predictable ends. Instead, in thinking through whiteness as a frame of recognition, I utilize whiteness as a discourse which is imbued with power through reiterated practices, actions, and language in order to authorize and sanction norms through which social relations might be governed. This Foucauldian approach to power is
not that of a sovereign authority which enacts power over subjects in straightforward ways (Foucault, 2003). Instead, disciplinary power:

is focused on cultivating individuals, altering their bearing and conduct, breaking them down into their parts and gestures and reconstituting them as soldiers or as factory workers, for example. This power is ubiquitous, exercised through surveillance, rituals of examination, detailed record-keeping. It is not about limitation and obedience but about enhancement of bodies’ capacities. (McWhorter, 2005, pp. 538-539)

When Manny says he lives in a white society, he does not mean that white people repeatedly tell him that he lives in a white society (however, this could be a part of whiteness). I read Manny’s declarations as his subjection to discourses which reiterate the normalizing effects of whiteness in the way he comes to recognize the “society” he lives in and the “school” he attends. Although he does not clearly state what practices sustain white society and white schools, it might be extrapolated that these practices are significant enough to impact the way he recognizes living in the Lower Mainland.

As Manny reiterates the normalizing power of whiteness in describing society and school, Arman addresses the effect of negative racialization of Sikh males in the Lower Mainland which makes him “feel responsible” to “promote” being a good Sikh whenever he is out in public. Even though it makes him “sad” that he is preoccupied with being perceived as a “nice guy” by others and making sure his behavior is acceptable at all times, he still continues to do so. Arman feels this compulsion “everywhere” he goes and gets “mad” whenever Sikhs do “dumb” things because of the potential ramifications for the rest of the Sikh community. Therefore, Arman reiterates the power of whiteness through self-surveillance of his own actions and the actions of other Sikhs through subjection to the regulative authority of the norm. Raree takes up Arman’s concern by comparing what Arman feels to the way he imagines what white males might feel in a similar situation. However, Raree feels that “No gora (white male) says Robert Pickton buried 10 hookers so I need to go out and be a good model for goray (white people)”. In this passage, Raree speculates that white males do not feel Arman’s struggle with having to represent an entire
identifiable cultural group when a white male serial killer is convicted of horrible crimes. For some reason, Raree thinks that what Arman feels “everywhere”, the burden of being representative of all Sikhs, is something white males do not experience in the same way, if at all. Yet why the discrepancy? What factors might influence the way Raree feels white males would react compared to Arman? Is Raree being a “reverse racist” in essentializing white males?

In linking Manny’s comment about living in a white society to Arman and Raree’s discussion, it is possible that Arman and Raree evidence the material effects of being subjected to the normalizing effects of whiteness. That is, by choosing to compare a brown male experience with white males (not Japanese males, Mexican males, or black males) Raree is once again establishing whiteness as the norm to which brown men certainly, and perhaps all men are measured. Also, in reading how Arman feels “sad” and “mad” that he has to be on his best behavior at all times, he hints to internalizing negative discourse about Sikh males that he has grown up with which actually affects his mood on a daily basis. The psychic effect of these discourses are intertwined with materiality in that Arman’s movements, gestures, expressions, modes of dress, places he is likely to hang-out, and the people he associates with in public might all reasonably be impinged upon in portraying that he is a “nice guy” (Butler, 1997b). These constraints partially form his subjectivity and have ramifications for the ways he identifies as a Sikh male.

In the above example, I argue that whiteness as an intra-group frame of recognition is being deployed by participants as a discursive lens through which they recognize others and themselves as a part of living in a multicultural society. Here, whiteness is considered the reiteration of the normalizing power and authority of whiteness through which society comes to be recognized. By Manny “calling whiteness out”, he alternately allows it to be critiqued while citing it as the norm through which society and individuals are compared. Moreover, at the same time Manny, Raree, and Arman discuss living in a multicultural society and its effects, they are also speaking from a “masculine” point of view. This does not mean that there is an essential masculine identity or universal standpoint, rather it is a point of interest

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31 Interestingly, in chapter three, Raree speaks about racism being a non-factor in people’s lives and that individuals need to take personal responsibility for their happiness.
that participants use examples of “other” males to contrast their experiences. Perhaps it is not surprising
that male participants use examples of other males in this way. What is suggested is that gender
performativity plays a role in thinking and living among ethno-racial “others” in a multicultural society
and this interplay is significant for how youth identify. Therefore, whiteness as an inter-group frame of
recognition through which youth identify and identify “others” not only reinforces ethno-racial
hierarchies, but is interwoven with gender norms, expectations, and consequences that Arman shares in
feeling his actions have to represent all Sikhs (Bell, 1999; Archer, 2003).

**Inter-group Frames of Recognition II: Racialization**

Poly: People do have something about them that is oddly true. In my neighborhood I can
basically predict what’s happening in everyone’s house. My Middle Eastern type friends have
family things that are so predictable. Like the dad just oozes Saudi like with the gold chain and
chest hair. The mom is just quiet.

Jasmine: You must know how Chinese parents are? You probably see it lot as a teacher. But it
feels like they are backwards to Punjabis. They have dads that basically don’t do anything, but the
moms are totally insane. They pound the disciple in kids early with school, school, school. It
doesn’t matter what the kids want because they have to play the instruments and do the math until
they drop.

Bava: So like at one point, this chick in grade 8 got her phone stolen. Everybody looked at the
black kid and was like check this guy. The guy's from Somalia, and he's like (mimicking
stereotypical African accent) "I didn't do anything, what you talking about” right. And then there
are the Muslim people right. Like we have a wood works teacher, I think he's Muslim. A lot of
people call him a terrorist.

In separate conversations with Poly, Jasmine, and Bava, the topic of “others” repeatedly comes up. For
example, Poly and Jasmine claim to know something “true” about racialized parents and how they might
dress, their attitudes, and their personalities while Bava speaks to negative stereotypes about a Somali
student, and a Muslim (all though he is not sure) teacher. What makes their data fragments different than
Manny, Raree, and Arman in the previous section is that the focus of these conversations seems to be on racialized “others” (Middle Eastern, Chinese, Somali, Muslim) employing what I describe as racialization as an inter-group frame of recognition.

Racialization makes clear that “race” is not an ontological given, but rather a socially constructed concept with varying contingent meanings. In other words, racialization is a process which “involves trying to understand how and why ‘race’ is injected into social relationships over time, rather than assuming that ‘race’ is an ever-present part of the natural order” (Garner, 2016, p. 5). Racialization is not simply about categorizing bodies according to morphology, but also involves connecting culture, or unique ethnic attributes, and religion with specific bodies (Murji & Solomos, 2005; Aly, 2015). Circumstance of racialization might vary according to context, but the result is the discursive constitution of bodies into “knowable groups” or what Poly describes as being “oddly true” about communities of color. Yet similar to whiteness, there are both micro (everyday actions of people) and macro (governmental initiatives such as a census requiring ethno-racial identification) level power dynamics which coincide to produce the “real” of bodies of color (Gans, 2017).

For subjects to be associated with certain stereotypical discourses such as “oozing Saudi” with a “gold chain” and “chest hair” requires citations of previous racializing discourse. It is through these discourses about the “other” that foreground Bava’s comment that a Somali youth at his school is being construed as a thief, and how a teacher who Bava believes to be Muslim would be associated with terrorism. The teacher does not even have to identify as Muslim because students could be reading skin color, surname, modes of dress, or an accent in order to recognize the teacher without the teacher knowing. Thus, “cultural and biological features (are used) to construct levels of superiority and inferiority” (Ponce, 2015, p. 12) even amongst youth of color in multicultural societies (Thomas, 2011). Jasmine exemplifies this point through the available discourses circulating about specific bodies like Chinese dads being stoic and stern, and Chinese moms being overbearing and controlling (Chua, 2011). These citations of prior racializing discourse “necessitates identifying an historical process” (Garner, 2016, p. 5) that would allow a Chinese mother to be portrayed as a “tiger mom” (Chua, 2011), or Chinese...
youth to be thought of as being pressured by their moms “until they drop”, or a black student from Somalia to be recognized as a thief, or Muslim teacher to be called a terrorists.

As evidenced by Poly, Jasmine, and Bava ethno-racial identities framed through inter-group racialization are also gendered. Saudi moms are quiet and dads wear gold chains. Chinese dads are emotionless and moms are hyper-emotional. A Somali male is a thief, and a Muslim male teacher is a terrorist. These descriptors are essentializing and show the way participants attach ethnonormative (Aly, 2015) performances with bodies that fall into male/female binaries. In other words, these negative stereotypes show the ways recognition of ethno-racial subjects cannot exclude the way gender discourses are inseparable from an analysis of racialized bodies. These discourses precede the subject and inform frames of recognition in how “others” come to be “known” by participants. Even if participants have been exposed to many examples contrary to the discourse about racialized others, perhaps it might be difficult not to delimit particular actions with gendered bodies of color due to the limitations in discussing difference through more complex language because of the enduring effects of these same discourses. In addition, racialization as an inter-group frame of recognition is not devoid of whiteness. As Ponce (2015) describes, whiteness might be reinforced through racial hierarchies which have negative connotations in societies where whiteness and privilege are not addressed. There are examples such as the ones Jasmine, Poly, and Bava provide of racialized subjects speaking explicitly toward ethno-racial differences, however if these conversations are happening within a larger multicultural society where the invisible norm of whiteness is not addressed, these two frames of recognition might appear separate. One way to attempt to analyze whiteness and racialization as frames of recognition that may be read in their interplay might be deduced from model minority discourses which were discussed by several of the participants in the study.

I turn to a more in-depth discussion of gender discourses in the constitution of Sikh youth subjectivities and identities in the next chapter.
Model Minorities

Manny: There is this othering happening where dominant culture still has control and label whomever they want. Like the Asian community are the token model minorities. They (dominant culture?) like them (Asian youth) because they quietly mingle and assimilate. They are the model minority…For me, there is a huge issue of othering of South Asian Sikhs particularly. I mean just look at me…We can't label ourselves because dominant culture labels us.

Arman: When I hear the news and Indo-Canadians, I'm thinking gangs. It's also the media just does things like that. But, I definitely think of gangs because when you hear East Indian male, you're gonna assume suspect, right? You're not going to think these guys are model minorities…We have to fit the mold. Just try to blend in and don’t rock the boat. It might change in the future because now Muslims are the bad guys catching all kinds of shit for being terrorists…It does take the pressure off of us which is good in a way.

In the passages above, Manny and Arman both share their thoughts on living in a multicultural society as Sikh males. Like Mole and Nav whose fragment appeared earlier in the chapter, Manny and Arman partially make sense of the society they live through an engagement with ethno-racial “others”. In this instance, they mention Asians and Muslims in the context of speaking about “model minorities”, who in Manny’s words, “quietly mingle and assimilate”. For Manny to use words like “mingle and assimilate” implies that he is aware of some set of normative standards and expectations to “assimilate” towards and he feels Asians are accomplishing this task in significant ways. Although Manny does not state what these expectations are, literature on model minorities refers to assets such as attaining high levels of scholastic achievement, not being serious behavioral issues, and the ability to take instruction and to follow rules without conflict (Chou & Feagin, 2016; Park, 2015). Therefore, it appears that there are at least two conditions to being labeled a “model minority”: 1.) that there is a discursive ideal or standard to aspire towards for racialized bodies in multicultural societies and some do it better than others, and 2.) that there are “model minorities” whose performative acts can be distinguished from and used to regulate “non-model minorities” (Prashad, 2000).
As hinted to in the statements, “You’re not going to think these guys are model minorities” and “there is a huge issue of othering of South Asian Sikhs particularly”, it is apparent that Manny and Arman feel Sikhs, and Sikh males in particular, fall outside the “model” category. Arman reasons that “the media” plays a role in portraying Sikh males as “suspects” which has a negative effect on how they are perceived more generally (Sayani, 2013; see also Frost, 2010). He understands that the media “just does things like that”, but he does think it is possible a different racialized group, Muslims, and specifically Muslim men, might replace Sikh males as the “bad guys” who do not “fit the mold”. Arman does not necessarily think of this switch in “bad guys” in purely negative terms as he states, “It does take the pressure off of us which is good in a way”. He bases the statement on observing that “Muslim are catching all kinds of shit for being terrorists” in the media, thus indicating he thinks about which racialized groups veer closer to the “model” and which are positioned as problematic. Therefore, it might be argued that model minority discourses force minorities to police each other as they struggle over a scarce resource which in this example might be the recognition that comes with being considered a “model” group in a “white society”.

Manny, a baptized Sikh male, points to his own physical body as a marker of difference from the “model” when he states, “I mean just look at me” during the interview. He invites me to pay attention to his turban, beard, and his kirpan which are symbols that baptized Sikhs wear as part of their religious tradition. For Manny, the invitation seems to imply that when he speaks about model minority Asians, who “mingle and assimilate”, he understands their bodies will be read differently than his as a result of religious symbols he wears on his body (Hopkins, 2006; Verma, 2006; Birk et al., 2015). Arguably, Manny’s comments can be read to speak to normative multiculturalism’s ability to “tolerate” race as something biologically unavoidable and therefore, not any one subject’s “fault”. However, religion might be cast as something different, or “rocking the boat” because of the implied purposeful “choice” to perform orthodox religious identities and invite public scrutiny. Therefore, Manny’s invitation for me to “look” at his body evidences some understanding of normative standards of appearance, and that he
thinks he is in violation of the standard. Thus, one of the consequences of violation might be Asians being perceived of as “models” and his own baptized Sikh identity being constituted as the “non-model”.

Read through inter-group frames of recognition, Manny and Arman participate in making meaning of racialized “others” (Asians and Muslims) through relevant discourses. For Asians to be cast as “models” and Sikhs to be “othered” as the current “bad guys” requires both groups to be situated in relation to each other, in relation to racialized others such as Muslims, and in relation to “others” unnamed. The repeated use of masculine referents such as “bad guys”, “these guys”, “males”, “gangs”, and “suspect” is also significant in that it shows participants frame multicultural identities through race, ethnicity and religion which are always marked by gender norms. These discourses are contingently important as Manny refers to his male orthodox religious corporeality, and Arman discusses stereotypical male behavior in regards to being in gangs and becoming suspects in connection with reiterating what is, and is not model behavior. Importantly, while Manny and Arman frame racialized others, they cannot escape the constitution of their own identities because they must either reiterate discourses, disavow, or re-signifying discourses with new meanings in local contexts (Butler, 2009). In other words, their subjection to discourse which frame recognition of “others” constructs the “constitutive outside” (Hall, 2000, p. 17) and “inside” which enables them to perform their Sikh identity.

Resurfacing again here is how Arman uses the term “they” and what Manny calls “dominant culture” which comes up in participant thinking about “the traditional racial framing and hierarchy” (Chou & Feagin, 2016, p. 217). “They” and “dominant culture” are understood to be euphemisms for a generalized ‘white’ Canadian society which, as Manny says, has the authority to “label us”. Here, Arman and Manny are not associating whiteness with individuals per se, but instead might be read as viewing whiteness as a discursive authority through which material privilege is made easier to secure for those understood as white (Leonardo, 2009; Mathias, 2016; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Based on Arman and Manny’s data fragment, it could be argued that one of these privileges might be understood as white

\[33\] In chapter three, Nav also used a “they” in describing an authority which regulates the way minorities are regulated in Canada.
people not having to compete amongst themselves for recognition as “model minorities”. In these examples, “people don’t have race in the conventional sense but are actively raced” (Best, 2003, p. 897) with various consequences. Therefore, whiteness is not something that is owned, but is achieved through tacitly reiterating discourses which cite specific forms of privilege, dominance, authority, superiority, or legitimacy of whiteness to structure normative standards within multicultural societies (Castagno, 2013).

The complexity of recognizing model minorities from other minorities indicates that inter-group multicultural frames of recognition “are interrupted by one another, they emerge and fade depending on broader operations of power” (Butler, 2009, p. 4). For example, Manny hints that his visibly orthodox body is non-normative through framing “dominant (white) society” as the regulator of standards and practices. This can take place even in multicultural societies which “subscribe to discourses of tolerance and, in some cases, even the celebration of cultural diversity, (but) they remain fractured by racism and ethnocentrism” (Weedon, 2004, p. 18). He also situates his body in relation to Asians which requires thinking about “an individual’s place in a social hierarchy and from where they speak” (Butler, 2000, p. 440). The hierarchy is framed by whiteness and has material consequences for racialized youth as alluded to by Manny who feels powerless to the regulative authority of model minority discourses structured by whiteness. Manny is simply making overt the simultaneous interrelated inter-group framing of racialization within the inter-group frame of whiteness. This means that these two frames simultaneously play a role in the process of subjection Manny undergoes in thinking about his own identity.

These inter-group dynamics are coercive in that on one hand, “Asian” students could benefit from being hierarchically arranged in a more advantageous position than Sikh students in the way they are perceived. Yet the model minority myth essentializes Asian students and fails to recognize the diversity within the discursive category (Lee, 2009). For example, Park (2015) expresses this unfair duality in an analysis of Burmese students who are both constituted through model minority discourses, while also being underserved in schools as working class Asian immigrants. Sikh youth are also complicit in this type of essentialization, or framing of inter-group others, as long as racialized youth compete for cultural capital within normative multiculturalism structured by the pervasiveness of whiteness (Yosso, 2006).
It is important to note that there is no deterministic model for how Sikh youth internalize ethnonormative discourses about what they should be, and how they should behave. Resistances are inherent within power relations which have the potential to push the boundaries and test the borders of inter-group identifications, including resistances to the dominance of whiteness. In other words the possibilities to alter, and potentially reify the discursive dominance of whiteness within the multicultural imaginary is a part of the process of identification. In the final section of the chapter, how participants use discursive agency to potentially undermine the legitimacy of whiteness and to re-signify the ways whiteness is framed will be examined.

**Reiterating “Non-Model” Behaviour or Challenging Whiteness?**

Bava: Ok, so once we had a substitute teacher and I think he had surgery on the *bootha* (mouth) or something. Like a white teacher whose mouth was all blah (contorting face). He said all the East Indian kids were doing bad things which was complete lies. So all these East Indian kids got really mad at this guy and started calling him *bingi moothi* (bent mouth) and stuff. Like sometimes the white teachers are nice, brown kids don't say anything. The teachers that actually are racist, the kids start swearing in Punjabi and stuff.

Harji: Accents are screwed up. So when a racist teacher tells Punjabi kids to answer questions they (the students) say "*I do this and I do that*" (in an exaggerated Punjabi accent, slightly moving head back and forth). Everyone just covers themselves and laughs. Like sometimes to piss a teacher off some kids that actually have Canadian accents make the Indian accent and the teacher kicks them out. Sometimes it's pretty funny and other times it's like what are you guys doing.

In the context of speaking about whiteness and racism in schools, Bava and Harji claim that teachers sometimes perceive the actions of Sikh youth negatively compared to other students. In response to what Bava calls “lies”, he and other students decide to mock the teacher’s mouth which he claims was reconstructed through surgery. The insult to the teacher might be read as rude, a deliberate attempt at humiliation, or a willful violation of school rules about respect. Another understanding might position the insult as a form of resistance to an authority figure which represents the dominance of whiteness to frame
Sikh youth behaviors as “bad”. In other words the insult to the teacher as resistance could be read as “the reversal and re-appropriation of mechanisms of power” (Mills, 2000, p. 269) through “counter-hegemonic individuals or groups” (ibid. p. 269) represented by Bava and other Sikh students. Understood as resistance, temporarily inverting the power relations where whiteness, as represented through the teacher, is on the defensive suggesting the power of whiteness as “(d)iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault, 1981, p. 96). If speaking Punjabi is taken as resistance to the authority of whiteness as represented by “racist teachers”, perhaps Bava is asserting his power in this situation. Not the power of a sovereign, but power in the sense of resignification of how power typically operates within the boundaries of the normative classroom. Perhaps the students know that the teacher will be placed in a quandary because he/she cannot be certain about what the Punjabi speakers were saying. The effect of the “foreign” language could pose problems as an unknown commodity within the field of normative schooling and therefore gives those who can speak or understand it temporary authority. Bava makes clear that “nice” teachers do not have to worry about such struggles with Punjabi students, but that what he perceives as unequal treatment will be met with some kind of a retort. Resistance in this sense cannot dismantle whiteness or render it completely powerless, but the situation could be read as showing the momentary misfiring and re-appropriations which take place through Bava’s acts.

In a similar example, Harji shares parody in the form of an exaggerated Punjabi accent used by students who do not have accents, has the effect of making other students disrupt the space of official learning and official curriculum. The commonsense authority of the alleged “racist” teacher is undermined in the midst of the laughter and bodily gestures of other students. When Harji says “Accents are screwed up” he might be suggesting he knows accents are a source of ridicule for non-native English speakers (Kaylaap, 2016). But in this context, if taken up as resistance to what he thinks is an intolerable teacher, Harji might be re-signifying the accent as a performative act of resistance. Put differently, perhaps the Punjabi speaking Sikh students re-appropriate a stereotype about their accents and “queer” it (Butler, 1997a) through “reappropriation and revaluation” (Mills, 2000, p. 266) in the classroom setting to
resist an alleged “racist teacher”. If this reading of exaggerated accents is taken up, Harji also indicates he is aware of limits to this type of resistance by saying “Sometimes it's pretty funny and other times it's like what are you guys doing”. That is, the resistance to whatever racism both Bava and Harji perceive might also be the same practices which further add to their being recognized within inter-group frames as undesirable learners or “not” model minorities (Youdell, 2003; 2006). Therefore, disruption to the teacher’s authority in front of the class through resistance is not assured to make a “racist” teacher see their wrong doings, or to challenge whiteness within society in general, however it may allow for an opening in challenging the authority of whiteness in this context.

**Bhangra Backtalk**

Bava: Like me and my friends were thinking one day, our PE class is full of Punjabi people so we said screw it. We started playing Punjabi music. My friend said “think about this man, this is the only school where Punjabi gaunay (songs) are played. In a white school! *In a white school!*” Everyone was just looking around shocked. Nobody said anything to us so we just let it go (Bava smiling, closes eyes, puts hands above head imitating *bhangra* dance moves). Then we just played it (Punjabi music) regularly in class.

Bava shares an anecdote from Physical Education class where the teacher allows hip hop, R & B, or poplar rock music to be played during activities. However, prior to the class Bava and his friend decided to challenge the normative music played in class. Bava assumes that because the “class is full of Punjabis” they would enjoy hearing Punjabi music. In this way, Bava both participates in the essentialization of other Punjabi students in class, while at the same time attempting to subvert the dominance of “Western” music in a school space. Bava’s excitement is also evident as he re-states his actions were of extra importance because they were “In a white school. *In a white school!*” What Bava interprets as “shock” on the faces of Sikh and non-Sikh students, might be read as a rupture or a subversion of the normative music played in PE through the beats and rhythms of *bhangra* music. Initially the music seems to be out of bounds and out of place, but then Bava alludes to a shift where
*bhangra* is recalibrated to account for the new, the different, and the unofficial within the space of the “white school” (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011).

Playing Punjabi music might seem innocuous and pose little challenge to the daily operation of whiteness in education and therefore a minor victory. However, the fondness with which Bava recalls the event through closing his eyes, smiling, and imitating *bhangra* moves, is important to make note of. This was a moment where his agency was rewarded and he exhibits a sense of pride about the situation. To Bava, the number of Punjabis in class warranted proper recognition of the music that he and his friend were fond of as Sikh youth in a place where it was previously not played, and remained unheard. In other words, through his (and his friend’s) intervention, the discursive practices of music, beats, language, doing *bhangra* in physical education class, temporarily sanctions cultural artefacts which were previously absent in this space.

Bava also states that Punjabi music began to be played regularly in class after he helped to initiate it. Perhaps this momentary victory through the subversion of the norms privileging Eurocentric customs in school spaces provide the grounds for youth agency through specific practices which provide new meanings in new contexts (Butler, 1997a). Yet there is no assurance behind Bava’s agency. It is the temporal dislodging of established discursive practices as they are continually challenged, re-signified, and circulated in new context which is key to challenging inter-group frames of recognition. Bava and his friend are implicated in relations of power as their subjection to normative whiteness is interrupted, for the time being, and has the potential to be reiterated into the future in unknown ways and manifestations.

**Conclusion**

Stating that ethno-racial differences are inherent to multicultural societies is not a revelation. That is because differences are evident in everyday circumstances as subjects living in close proximity must engage in some form of interaction. Whether this is at work, during leisure time, in transit, and in specific places such as schools, the fact of difference in diverse societies is clearly apparent. However, the fact of difference is one part of the equation while taking up how differences might be understood is a more complex matter. Recognizing the “other” suggests the constitution of an “outside” (Hall, 2000, p.17)
through “acts of differentiation” (Butler, 1995, p. 12), which gives the illusion of a coherent inside of identity. Therefore, I argue that the ways participants come to know the various “others” in a multicultural society has important ramifications for their own subjectivities and identity claims as Sikhs living in the Lower Mainland.

In this chapter, what I term **multicultural frames of recognition** were advocated for in understanding the complex relationship between constituting the self and other (Butler, 2009). Inter-group frames of recognition of whiteness and racialization were identified as important aspects in staging how difference is understood, made meaning of, and affects the material conditions of peoples’ lives. Specifically in this chapter, discourses that inform participant understanding of living in a white society and how they understand other racialized bodies are not disassociated from each other as is evident through how participants define who is, and who is not a model minority. Multicultural frames of recognition can overlap in categorizing and labelling ethno-racial subjects at the same time as participants reiterate and subvert these frames. This is not to say that all racialized groups are identified in the same way or that living in a white society is understood identically by participants. Rather, subjection through discursive frames in multicultural societies might cultivate a desire for recognition as ethnonormative subjects, and compel participants to see the world they live in terms of identifiable ethno-racial groups.

As discussed throughout the chapter, discourses of race, ethnicity, and religion are also gendered and play a significant regulative role in how racialized and white identities might be interpreted as “gangsters”, “suspects”, “terrorists”, “uninvolved dads”, or “strict moms” which suggests any attempt at framing ethno-racial differences is also a gendered endeavor.

While frames of recognition seem to endure, participants evidence that frames can be, in a way, pushed, troubled, critiqued and thus are open to subversion. The ability to shift the boundaries of these frames is often marked by violating the injunction to perform an ethnonormative identity which is palatable or associable with specific bodies. In addition, reconstituting the way certain negative aspects of racialized identities, such as shaming someone for having a Punjabi accent, can be used in moments to challenge the authority of dominant epistemological narratives. Thus inter-group frames of recognition
offer an opportunity to think through youth framing of multicultural differences while simultaneously
challenging the frames through which they have come to be known in the Lower Mainland. In the next
chapter, how Sikh youth understand differences within their self-identified communities will be theorized
in relation to living in a multicultural society and the opening and foreclosing of differences which might
constitute subjectivities and identities.
CHAPTER 5

Intra-Group Multicultural Frames of Recognition

In chapter 4, three multicultural frames of recognition were introduced as being significant for how participants understood ethno-racial differences within the contested space of the multicultural imaginary. Inter-group differences between whiteness, inter-group differences between racialized others, and intra-group differences within the Sikh community were discussed in relation to how the Sikh youth in this study made sense of differences, and how framing of differences was also important in constituting their own identities. In the previous chapter, I offered analysis of inter-group differences through the example of model minority discourses, and argued that whiteness in many ways stages the grounds through which racialized bodies frame each other. In this chapter, I move to investigate the ways Sikh youth make sense of differences within their self-identified community and what effect intra-group frames of recognition might have on the identification process. In doing so I look to the ways participants negotiate what it means to be Sikh through how they frame other Sikh bodies in the context of living in the multicultural Lower Mainland. I argue that framing those within self-identified communities is an integral and often overlooked aspect of influences on youth subjectivities and identities (Jimenez, Fields & Schachter, 2015).

Although in this chapter intra-group differences are focused on, it is important to revisit how frames of recognition always influence each other. By this I mean that multicultural contexts where normative understandings of Sikh identities are deployed by other Sikhs takes place in a world where participants frame “others” and are also aware that “others” are framing them. However, as discussed in chapter two, there might also be unique socio-cultural factors relating to discourses uniquely playing out within Sikh communities. For example, the ways a historical understanding of the caste system in India and associated practices influenced participant recognition of other Sikhs during the research project in the present. In other words, this chapter pays heed to how participants framing of other Sikhs takes place in a larger multicultural milieu where issues such as the discursive authority of whiteness (as discussed in
chapter 3 and 4) is contended with in conjunction with historical understandings of what it means to be a Sikh which have developed within this community over time.

In the rest of the chapter I look to how Sikh youth perform their identities in relation to the ways they frame other Sikhs by asking: How do intra-group frames of recognition contextually constitute and regulate how Sikh identities are “enacted, staged, tried on, surveyed, recognized, and regulated through language, performance, and appearance (O’Donoghue, 2012, p. 316)? What citations and injunctions against “other” Sikhs are relevant to participants? What discursive practices are cited, reiterated, and transformed in the process of performing identities? What possibilities exist for Sikhs to recognize Sikh identities differently in the Lower Mainland?

**Framing Sikhs: Intra-Group Difference**

Seva: I’m a Sikh, but that’s not saying much cuz basically everyone brown in my school can say they are Sikh. We rule the population. I’m surrounded by brown people all day. But that’s a major problem because there are so many upanay (our people) in my school. We need a way to unite but we never can because this one says I’m a Sikh because I pray, this one says I’m a Sikh and I cut my hair, this one says I can get high, or this one says I wear a pug (turban). The problem is you’re basically showing the world that Sikhs are anything and that’s not a good thing…It’s to the point where basically I avoid brown people because I know there is going to be drama about who’s doing the whole Sikh thing right. It’s hard because I know someone’s gonna judge you the second they see you. But I do it too (judge other Sikhs) like “what the hell are those guys doing because they definitely aren’t Sikhs.” Just some weird off-shoot branch or something. (15 year old Sikh male)

In thinking about his daily activities, Seva relays that he is “surrounded by brown people all day”. Even at the high school he attends, Seva states that Sikhs “rule the population”. Perhaps it is due to the sheer numbers of other Sikhs that he comes in contact with on a daily basis that he notices particular differences within his self-identified community. For example, Seva thinks through differences such as Sikhs that pray, cut their hair, wear turbans, and get high as being an obstacle to “a way to unite” as a community
and in his opinion, “that’s not a good thing”. In this sense, he does not romanticize differences he sees in his community, but sees difference as antithetical to unifying under the sign “Sikh”. Seva also communicates that difference has caused “drama” in his life because he feels other Sikhs will judge him “the second they see you”. Conversely, he also confesses that he is not above judging other Sikhs as he admits “But I do it too (judge other Sikhs) like what the hell are those guys doing because they definitely aren’t Sikhs.”

As Seva evidences, Sikhs making meaning of other Sikhs might not be the only way difference is negotiated, yet still proves to be contingently significant in how he bestows recognition on who is, and who is not “doing the whole Sikh thing right”. In other words, his desire for unification as a Sikh hints that his own coherence as a subject is bound to some type of normative standard through which he can declare “others” “some weird off-shoot branch”. Perhaps his desire for unity is a part of a cultural survival strategy in school, or perhaps he is displeased with the proliferation of the category Sikh because it weakens the political potential of the community. Regardless, Seva suggests that the sign “Sikh” is recognized through bodies performing identities via the reiteration of discursive practices which precede subjects (praying, cutting hair, wearing turbans, getting high) and regulates how he understands his community. Those that Seva recognizes as “off-shoots” might be considered as subverting the norms he invests in and establishes as constituting boundaries of a Sikh identity. Although he does not give specifics, Seva’s negotiation of these boundaries through regulation, embodiment, and subversion establishes which bodies, actions, gestures and practices convey a Sikhness, and what might be foreclosed as unintelligible (Butler, 2004a; Nayak & Kehily, 2006). In this way, intra-group frames of recognition appear to have some significance in the way Seva identifies as a Sikh and how he recognizes others as transgressing boundaries. In order to unpack the significance of intra-group frames of recognition on youth subjectivities and identities, I now turn to one specific type of difference which reoccurs within the data and might allow for the importance of intra-group differences to be illuminated.
Regulating Sikhs: To Baptize or Not Baptize

Devyn: A Sikh should choose a life according to the teachings of the Guru (Guru Granth Sahib)\textsuperscript{34}, but our physical appearance and lifestyle obviously plays a big part in that. That’s a big deal. Your body has to show what you stand for or it doesn’t matter. You can’t have it both ways. I get so mad when people are like “I’m a Sikh”, but you know, random chicks are cutting their hair, and guys are all partying or whatever. It’s like what the hell. Your insides should match your outside 24/7. That’s why I’m amrit-shucked (baptized).

Jasmine: There are so many hypocrites out there. Ok, I’m a Sikh, but I’m Sikh because I always try to do the right thing, not because of what I look like or things like my hair. That’s totally false to say you have to amrit-shuck (to be baptized) and you have to be a “goody-two-shoes”. It’s all for show because I know a lot of those kids are total rebels. They do it all…The true Sikh, if you want to get real about it, only has to practice the way of our Gurus. If you live a pure life and don’t hurt others, you’re a Sikh. My body doesn’t have to look like anything.

Devyn and Jasmine’s quotes address a specific kind of difference they understand as relevant to being a Sikh in the context of the Lower Mainland. For example, the “regulation of identificatory practices” (Butler, 1993, p. 3) is engaged by Devyn through the performative utterance: “That’s why I’m amrit-shucked (baptized)” as Devyn clearly comes to recognize who is a Sikh, and who is not considered a Sikh. Her claims to an “authentic” Sikh identity are a result of taking baptism (amrit), wearing religious signifiers on her body, and engaging in specific practices which reiterate a religious, or orthodox identity (doing specific prayers at specific times of the day, abstaining from eating meat, not taking intoxicants such as liquor or drugs). Conversely, in her data fragment, Jasmine states that “The true Sikh, if you want to get real about it, only has to practice the way of our Gurus” by living a “pure life” and not hurting

\textsuperscript{34} The most sacred of Sikh holy texts. A compilation of teachings from the time of the 10 Gurus of Sikhism. Also referred to as a “Guru” because it was established by the last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, as the final authority for Sikhs on earth.
others. In her opinion, she does not have to partake in baptismal rituals or wear associated symbols of the Sikh faith because her actions, deeds, and egalitarianism are more important. Jasmine feels her “body doesn’t have to look like anything” as long as she follows the tenets of the faith.

As evidenced by Devyn’s statement “your body should match your insides 24/7”, and Jasmine’s rebuttal that physical displays of religiosity are “all for show”, the signifier Sikh can be a site of struggle and contestation over “passionate attachments” (Butler, 1997b). In this case, Devyn and Jasmine show that in making claims to a Sikh identity, they reiterate prior discourses about baptized and non-baptized identities which precede their subjection to these discourse. For example, the debate over baptized and non-baptized identities has been negotiated throughout Sikh communities since the incorporation of baptism in the faith in 1699 (Oberoi, 1999; Singh, 2001). However, Sikhs did not always undergo baptism. For more than two centuries, beginning with the philosophies of the first great teacher of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), Sikhs followed the teaching complied by nine gurus without the establishment of formal baptismal rites35. That changed as the final living guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, initiated baptism and five symbols for Khalsa, or baptized Sikhs, to wear on their bodies (Dahiya, 2014). For Gobind Singh, an era of Sikh persecution at the hands of Mughal rulers needed to be increasingly resisted. An important part of that resistance was to claim a visible Sikh identity in the face of persecution to instill a sense of pride, purpose, and inspiration for all followers (McLeod, 2006). Yet baptism was not mandated for every Sikh. This left the masses the ability to assert a Sikh identity even if a small group desired to become baptized and in so doing, adhere to embodying an orthodox identity. What remains in the present is the debate of whether a Khalsa identity represents the highest form of sacrifice and commitment to Sikh ideals that all must attain, or if it is one of several equal sects or factions within the community (Oberoi, 1999; Singh, 2001).

35 As stated in the introductory chapter, this dissertation is not a history of the Sikh religion. There is not space in the current project to give a respectful rendition of the evolution of Sikhism. Rather, how youth interpret and represent Sikhism in modern multicultural societies is of central importance.
Devyn and Jasmine embody the modern day effects of the significance of discourses relating to baptized and non-baptized identities from the Gobind Singh era into the present. These “traces of history” (Butler, 1990, p. 82) do not represent universal truths about a binary which exists in the Sikh community, but are rather “categories of identity (which) act as performatives, producing rather than describing subjects” (Teague, 2015, p. 299). Instead, Devyn and Jasmine show how knowledge about other Sikhs is an important factor in how they identify as subjects in a multicultural society. As a result, through opinions, language, bodies, appearances, actions, and beliefs, Devyn and Jasmine reveal the process of regulation inherent to performing their Sikh identity through discourses about baptized and non-baptized identities which are relevant within intra-group frames of recognition.

Performing Baptized Sikh

Ralit: I consider the Punjabi community and Sikh community two different things. So people from the Punjabi community and background, they know a little bit about Sikhism and go to gurdwara (temple) and get married in a gurdwara and do all those things in the gurdwara, but they don’t practice Sikhism. They don’t wear a turban… It is sort of hard to explain to others (non-Sikhs) that there are Punjabi-Sikhs and they are not practicing their religion. I am practicing.

Satwant: First you should believe in the religion. Then whether you have extremely strong feelings you can take the next step towards being amrit-shucked (baptized) and further deepen your connection. However, not being amrit-shucked (baptized) doesn’t mean you can’t be a Sikh…It’s just different.

Ralit and Satwant are two baptized Sikh females who partially communicate their Sikh identity in relation to the importance of baptized and non-baptized discourses. Ralit addresses this divide by thinking through the separation of religion and a generalized Punjabi ethnicity in framing her own identity as a “practicing” Sikh, while non-baptized Sikhs are addressed as “Punjabi-Sikhs”. For Ralit, Punjabi-Sikhs know only “a little bit” about Sikhism through casually attending the gurdwara (temple) for various functions, yet “they are not practicing their religion”. That is because Ralit equates “practicing” or “doing” Sikhism
with being baptized and wearing religious symbols as visible signifiers of a Sikh identity. The turban as a signifier is important to Ralit as it represents the respectful covering of kes, or unshorn hair, which is one of the five K’s of the Khalsa (orthodox) Sikhs. Therefore, according to Ralit, performing her identity through embodying discourses of orthodoxy not only constitutes her notion of self, but also serves as a regulatory mechanism to identify who is, and is not, “practicing” Sikh properly. Here Ralit distinguishes between a more religious Sikh identification from her understandings of Punjabi ethnicity which she forecloses as clearly not measuring up to a Sikh ideal.

Similarly, Satwant a 19 year old baptized Sikh female tries to explain the complexities of the baptized-non-baptized binary Ralit relies on in a more nuanced way by stating “It’s just different” instead of totally invalidating youth from claiming a more secular36 Sikh identity. Satwant’s statement does not directly establish a binary opposition between secular and orthodox youth. However, by suggesting subjects should “deepen your connection” and “take the next step” Satwant implies Sikhs who forego baptism will forever remain “just different”. In other words, Satwant refers to a hierarchy within Sikhism in which taking baptism and wearing symbols of the faith represent the goal all Sikhs should aspire to achieve. Even if she implies degrees of belonging to a Sikh ideal, Satwant still frames non-baptized Sikhs as being somehow “different” than she is in the context of an intra-group frame of recognition. Her theorizing is significant in that she both polices the boundaries of Sikh identities, and also shows her identity in a multicultural society is contextually dependent upon the way she frames other Sikhs. Not only is the diversity within the community pointed out, but so are the contingent religious discourse which factor in the ways Satwant recognizes herself in society.

Manny (baptized Sikh male, 21): Amrit-dhari Sikhs (baptized Sikh) have something (non-baptized) Sikhs do not. It is the rehat-maryada (code of conduct). You don’t have to sit and think about this, you already have it laid out for you and you just have to do it…I think we should have

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36 Secular in this dissertation does not denote the absence of religion or religious practices in the lives of participants. Instead, similar to the literature on Jewish identities, secular relates to the multiplicity of discursive choices subjects feel they should be allowed to make in representing their Sikh identities between religious and ethnic identifications (Moore, 2008)
a collective understanding about what *Sikhi* (Sikhism) is, but we live in a religious west. Religion is looked upon negatively. Being raised in a religious family and having a very religious mindset myself, I take the position of what the rehat (code) says.

As a baptized Sikh male, Manny expresses his reliance on the *Rehat-Maryada*, or code of conduct that baptized Sikhs like himself, Devyn and Satwant follow. The *Rehat Maryada*, or code-of-conduct, specifies which behaviors and bodily practices Sikhs can participate in and abstain from as a result of taking baptism (McLeod, 2006). Moreover, the modern rehat was established by Sikh scholars in 1931 in order to consolidate the vast amount of literature written on the topic of appropriate behavior for *Khalsa* Sikhs, and Sikhs more generally. According to the Sikh *Rehat Maryada*, it:

- provides guidelines against which all Sikh individuals and communities around the world can measure themselves. The *Rehat Maryada* is the only version authorized by the *Akal Takht*, the seat of supreme temporal authority for Sikhs. Its implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism. (p. 1)

The rehat is uniquely important in establishing the constitutive boundaries for baptized and non-baptized Sikhs living around the world in order to clarify issues of identity which may surface. Manny feels “a collective understanding about *Sikhi*” through the code of conduct gives orthodox Sikhs “something” to base their identities on as compared to the “other”, or non-baptized Sikhs, whose desire for recognition is based on more loosely outlined definitions (Moore, 2008). For Manny, a benefit of having his identity as a Sikh constituted through the code is that “you already have it laid out for you and you just have to ‘do’ it”. Here, embodying the “code” through recitations in everyday life echo Devyn’s earlier comments that one’s “body has to show what you stand for or it doesn’t matter” and that “you can’t have it both ways”.

For these particular participants, the code of conduct enables discursive practices which constitute the desire for recognition as orthodox Sikhs, and also regulates the boundaries of non-Sikh behaviors and actions.

The *Rehat Maryada* can be read as an extension of normative discourses which constitutes orthodox identities. In other words, Devyn, Manny, and Satwant’s subjection to the socially sanctioned
authority of the code of conduct evidences how the psychic effects of discourse are internalized and can materialize through bodies (Butler, 1997b). For example, their bodies are adorned with symbols of the faith and they participate in certain actions (prayers) while abstaining from others (drinking, smoking). These actions not only productively constitute identity positionalities, but they also act to foreclose that which is different, or outside of how Manny, Devyn, and Satwant define being Sikh. In this instance, how these participants frame secular Sikhs as “others” shows that foreclosures of difference must contend with the inevitable return of the “other”, an “other” which is needed to simultaneously entrench identifications and open spaces for potential resignifications (Butler, 2004).

Foreclosure of differences “works not to prohibit existing desires but to produce certain kinds of objects and to bar others from the field of social production” (Butler, 1997b, p. 25). Manny, Devyn, and Satwant “are themselves grounded in regulatory – normative and normalizing – operations of power” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 101) which require the “constitutive outside” (Hall, 2000, p. 17), in this case, non-baptized Sikhs, in order to constitute their own identities. Therefore, the process of meaning making within ethno-racial communities proves to be a significant part of the identification process for participants such as Manny, Devyn, and Satwant. Their knowledge about Sikh history, religion, and ethnicity apparently has some influence on their subjectivities and identity investments. Thus intra-group understandings of differences within Sikh communities proves to be an important frame of recognition within the multicultural Lower Mainland.

Performing Non-baptized Sikh

If Devyn and Manny perform Sikh through orthodox discursive practices such as taking baptism and displaying religious symbols on bodies in conjunction with living “life according to the teachings of the Guru”, Jasmine’s take on discourses about non-baptized bodies are just as relevant to her identity as a Sikh. Jasmine eschews religious symbols as irrelevant to performing Sikh while focussing on actions she associates with the “Gurus” such as doing “the right thing”, living a “pure life” and not hurting others. These practices are not just significant tropes within Sikh scriptures, but they also represent a reiteration of a corporeal identity associated with “doing” Sikh devoid of orthodox symbolism. Whereas Devyn
advocates for embodiment of external signifiers which matches an inner spirituality through baptism, Jasmine is staunch in her opinion that “my body doesn’t have to look like anything”. This does not mean that the body is irrelevant in Jasmine’s thinking, but that the body takes on meanings through actions, gestures, and practices which are different than for Devyn. Jasmine also claims she knows that some baptized Sikh youth are “rebels” or hypocrites whose bodily appearance represents what she labels as a “goody-two-shoes” persona. She suggests that within her community of Sikhs, baptized youth might have a pious outer-appearance, yet these youth engage in actions such as drinking alcohol and cutting their hair which they are supposed to abstain from. This represents a “falsehood” according to Jasmine who says “real” Sikhs performs their identities through good deeds and not hurting others, not by wearing religious iconography on the body.

Peekay backs up Jasmine’s more secular stance by saying, “It's not a part of our religion that you have to wear a keski (a type of head covering for uncut hair). It’s an option if you want to”. The “option” which Peekay invests in is just as historically based as baptized Sikhs’ reiteration of the code of conduct. Through stating it’s an “option if you want to”, Peekay refers to the era before baptism was installed as a part of the Sikh tradition (prior to 1699). Head coverings in the era before baptism had different connotations as a part of normal attire in the context of the Indian subcontinent. As the follower of the ten Gurus were called Sikh (which means learner or student) long before there was a baptismal ritual, the majority of Sikhs into the present day are not-baptized\(^{37}\). Therefore, Peekay does not place significance on baptism and religious symbols on the body as justifications for an essential Sikh identity.

Similarly, Raree, a non-baptized Sikh male comments that, “These symbols don’t mean anything in life to what kind of person you are. It’s all just a bunch of lies. Like no no, these symbols mean this, and I live this kind of life. It's so crazy” (sarcastically). Raree denounces the significance of religious symbolism by saying “it’s all a bunch of lies” through his subjection to more secular discourse. In addition, he states, “I still go out and enjoy going out. It's one of those things. Just because you have your

\(^{37}\) According to McLeod (2008), Khalsa Sikhs might make up an estimated 15% of those who consider themselves Sikh.
head shaved (as he does) doesn't mean you can't listen to paat (Sikh prayers) and enjoy the benefits of (Sikhism)”. Raree, as with Jasmine and Peekay, regulates and forecloses baptized Sikh bodies as he thinks their justifications for claiming a Sikh identity are “crazy” which precipitates, as he later states, “a holier than thou complex”. His derision might be read as a form of sanction which cast baptized Sikhs as “others” who Raree perceives as having ill-intentions, or simply lacking the “right knowledge” for making rational decisions in regards to their Sikh identity.

In analyzing Jasmine, Peekay, and Raree’s comments about their non-baptized identity, it is evident that their identity investments within an intra-group context are just as passionate and important as baptized youth. In this way, Peekay and Raree can be considered to “participate in the framing of intelligibility of different sorts” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 480) as they make meaning of baptized bodies they come across in everyday social contexts. Their identities are also affected by the discourses which influence their subjection on the matter of which identities within their community are “more real” than others. Their choice not to be baptized and not to wear symbols of the faith suggests that they too foreclose orthodoxy as a type of difference which is unnecessary in communicating an authentic Sikh identity.

In actuality there is a wide range of embodied practices and performances which Sikh subjects might come across in everyday intra-group contexts. As demonstrated by the participants above, there are spaces of overlap and then clear delineation between an ethnic Sikh identity and a more religious ideal which regulates bodies. For example, not all men who wear turbans are baptized Sikhs. Some may wear turbans to social events such as weddings, funerals, and cultural celebrations only to put the turbans aside during day to day activities. In addition, many Sikhs, whether more secularly inclined or orthodox, might be observed wearing a kara, or steel bracelet, around their wrist which technically is one of the 5K’s worn by baptized Sikhs. Yet some Sikhs wear the kara as a fashion statement or to show their ethnic affiliations as Punjabis. In this way, the kara has evolved differently for youth identities than the kirpan (steel blade) and kes (uncut-covered hair). What is important to note is that Sikh youth are aware of these evolving differences and are forced to try and situate their own identities within their self-identified communities.
As argued in the introduction to this chapter, and revealed through Devyn’s statement, “I get so mad when people are like “I’m a Sikh”, but you know, random chicks are cutting their hair and guys are all partying or whatever”, religious and ethnic discourse are also informed through gender (chicks, guys) constructs. How gender norms emerge through baptized and non-baptized discourses and how participants make meaning of these “differences” in relation to intra-group frames of recognition will be discussed below.

**Gendering Baptized Bodies: Embodiment and Sikh Identity**

Kal: Are there differences within Sikh youth gender groups?

Sara: (14 years old, non-baptized female): The only difference I see are between girls that are baptized and girls that are not… Like their religion is the same, but there are a lot of differences between them. Like *amrit-shuck* (baptized) girls have long hair, they probably would go to the temple and do more prayers than non-baptized girls would. And I find their personalities a bit different too. I find *amrit-shuck* girls quieter… Like *non-amrit-shuck* (non-baptized) girls I find them like just a little bit different than that. Just a little bit louder and stuff.

Nav: (15 year old, non-baptized girl): We have more freedom than *amrit-shuck* (baptized) girls. I think they don’t know the reason behind why they are doing things. Like why are they doing that (keeping their hair long), why are they wearing that (turban)? Sometimes little kids do it because their parents want them to. So like, when they go into public high school, they think “I want to cut my hair” and then the parents are like “NO”.

Sara and Nav are two female high school students who speak to their understanding of baptized and non-baptized bodies through discussing female orthodox identities. Sara, for example states that “the only difference” she sees within Sikh gender groups being about girls who are baptized and girls who are not. She theorizes orthodox female lives as one of attending temple, praying, and being “more quiet” as compared to non-baptized girls who are “a bit louder and stuff”. She also denotes orthodox bodies through the significance of the visible signifier “long hair” and/or hair coverings. Here, Sara appears to take the visual cues of orthodoxy and associate them with female passivity as indicated by the descriptor...
“quiet”. In other words, whether baptized girls are actually quieter or louder is arguable, but Sara might come to recognize females who wear religious symbols as performing more traditional, perhaps pre-modern, types of passive gender roles as compared to non-baptized Sikh girls.

Nav extends this point by saying she has “more freedom” than baptized girls. The “freedom” she claims as a non-baptized body not only forgoes any recognition of mechanism of power and regulation impinging on her life, but also essentializes baptized girls for their “lack” of freedom. Nav denies possibilities for discursive agency (Butler, 1997a) to baptized girls as she thinks they “don’t know the reason behind why they are doing things” which constitutes orthodox girls as passive, traditional and infantilized through a state of dependency on the regulative authority of parents and religion (Piela, 2012; Siddiqui, 2008; Singh, 2005). Importantly, Nav shares that it is in “public high school” where baptized girls will go through a type of transition and will start to view aspects of their identities as problematic. For instance, Nav states that baptized girls would want to cut their hair in high school as they increasingly come to see hair (particularly long hair which is required to be covered) as an unnecessary or undesirable religious tradition. For Nav, perhaps the context of high school brings more self-awareness or access to an increased variety of belief systems through which baptized Sikh girls would naturally choose to cut their hair. It might be inferred through Nav’s data fragment that the “standards” which “animate, and constrain” (Butler, 1993, p. 22) the baptized gendered subject fall outside the bounds of normative female performance in public schools. This is significant in two particular ways. Nav might be performing her Sikh identity in order to “fit in” within a wider societal context, yet she does not recognize that she is also regulated through normative gender discourses; and regulation is considered a circumstance only for baptized bodies who have to live by an unrealistic “code”. Thus, the perceived lack of control in decision making for baptized females reasserts traditional gender roles where young women have decisions made for them by their parents or religious authority.

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38 A more in-depth conversations about schools will be had in the following chapter.
Sara and Nav speak to the ways gender discourses always interact with ethno-racial discourses through intra-group frames of recognition (Bell, 1999). This indicates racial, ethnic, or religious identities “become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility” (Butler, 1990a, p. 5) within intra-group frames of recognition. The regulatory framework participants deploy gives the “illusion of substance” (Butler, 1990, p. 146) to the binary between baptized and non-baptized identities, and the “illusion” has material consequences for how identities are performed. For instance, both Sara and Nav refer to hair as a symbol of orthodoxy, and by contrast attach meaning to their ability to cut their hair with secular choices. As Nayak and Kehily (2006) state, “In this reading, gender identity is an embodied action that does not exist outside of its ‘doings’; rather, its performance is also a reiteration of previous ‘doings’ that become intelligible as gender norms” (p. 468). Therefore, intra-group framing of other Sikhs not only has material effects, but shows gender discourses are important to how religion, race, and ethnicity impact youth subjectivities and identities.

Vikki: I was never invited to parties because people (other Sikhs) obviously assumed that I’m not... Like even though I would have probably gone, it wasn't like a big deal to me. But it was like, oh this group of girls (baptized) always hangs out together because they have this schema… Like they all do their hair a certain way.

Anand: Me and my twin sister, we used to get bullied a lot because we didn’t do our eyebrows, we didn’t get our hair cut, and stuff like that. It was always the Indian (Sikh) kids that would bully and it was like, you’re such a dipper" because you don’t cut your hair, why don’t you do something else with it blah, blah, blah.

In a discussion about intra-group framing, Vikki and Anand share that there are material consequences to being constituted as baptized Sikh females. Vikki thinks that other Sikhs see her as traditional, or under the control of an authority that would never allow her and the “group of girls” (other baptized Sikhs) she hangs out with to enjoy the modern aspects of youth culture such as partying or going out. Vikki claims

\[ Dipper \text{ is used as a pejorative by Sikhs against other Sikhs meaning something close to having an immigrant’s mentality, or someone who has not adopted new ways of living, or being backwards.} \]
she is “never invited to parties” because of assumptions made about her as someone who would not want
to, would not be allowed to, or may not be welcomed to attend. In effect, leisure activities and normal
youth socialization might be barred to Vikki in certain instances which has an obvious effect on her social
life. Similarly, Anand states that she was bullied in school as a result of performing an orthodox female
identity. In being called a “dipper” by other Sikhs, Anand express the material consequences of being
misrecognized by her Sikh peers as someone who is “fresh of the boat”, an immigrant or new to aspects
of modernity because of her bodily performativity. Additionally, Anand shares she does not “do” her
eyebrows or cut her hair which again signals the importance of hair as the pretense for reading her body
as transgressing norms of femininity, and thus potentially warranting sanction.

The discussion about intra-group frames of recognition suggest baptized and non-baptized
identities remain tied to how discourses continually affect youth subjectivities and identities in
multicultural societies. However, there is still the possibility of subversion and proliferation of identities
through discursive agency (Butler, 1997a). In other words, the rigid normative codes which anchor these
identities contain within the potential to give “trouble”, or proliferate new possibilities in the constitution
of Sikh identities (Lather, 2006). How Sikh bodies might come to be known differently in intra-group
contexts through reinscriptions of relevant discourses and behaviors is not a linear process with
predictable destinations. Instead it is a process of overturning the norms through which bodies come to
matter in various way, with various results. It is to a discussion of the re-signifying of Sikh youth
identities which concludes the section on intra-group frames of recognition.

Re-signifying Baptized and Non-Baptized Identities

Ralit: Have you heard of those two terms moderates and fundamentalist?

Kal: Yes.

Ralit: When I was running for elections for the gurudwara (Sikh temple) I was going on radio
shows and TV shows (Punjabi produced programing). I was asked this a lot. We (baptized Sikhs)
were described as fundamentalists.

Kal: Is it a way people describe you which might not be accurate?
Ralit: Right, that’s true. But I would recognize myself as a moderate Sikh because, I am very moderate. I take technology and use it to educate youth about Sikhism. I use technology and I use their (youth) language to teach them who they are. Where they belong. So I consider myself moderate anyway. They (show hosts) asked me this question like why do you want to be on a gurudwara committee, because you’re someone who goes to university, you have friends, and you are very young. I was 19 back then. So… I don’t know how I responded to that, but I still remember that they kind of put me in that situation where you don’t know how to answer something and it’s really weird. So if you have uncut hair, you’re going to be considered a fundamentalist and if you have cut hair you are moderate. It’s hard for people to believe Sikhs like me who do not cut their hair can be moderate people.

Ralit is a baptized Sikh female who shares a story about being interviewed on Punjabi radio and TV stations about temple elections. At the age of 19, young for campaigning, she ran for the very public position of committee member in a Sikh temple with one of the largest congregations in British Columbia. In prefacing our conversation, Ralit asks me if I am aware of the terms “moderates” and “fundamentalists” before sharing that she is often categorized as a fundamentalist by other Sikhs, including radio and TV hosts, because of her outward appearance. “Fundamentalist” proves to be a term automatically used to categorize baptized Sikhs based on their outward appearance. Yet Ralit shares that she “recognizes” herself as “moderate” in her lifestyle and belief system through examples such as teaching young Sikhs and using technology. Ralit is also outgoing as evidenced by her long record of volunteerism in the community (which is the way I became aware of her), and taking part in public radio and TV broadcasts which causes her to lament, “It’s hard for people to believe Sikhs like me who do not cut their hair can be moderate people”.

In my discussion with Ralit, it is clear that she is aware of the way her body is read within an intra-group frame of recognition, but she refuses to accept her categorization. This means that even in

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40 Normally, but not exclusively, such political positions are occupied and campaigned for by men.
intra-group contexts “stereotypes are one primary force of objectification and operate as a potent method of maintaining exclusionary and inclusionary definitions” (Puar, 1996, p. 136). However, these same stereotypes are open to contestation. In this way, Ralit uses her own actions (helping younger Sikhs, using technology, volunteering, participating in temple elections, participating in public media) as an attempt to unhinge baptized bodies from discourses of traditionalism, backwardness, and passivity associated with baptized girls and spoken to by other participants above. In other words, through “discursive agency” (Butler, 1997a, p. 127) within an intra-group frame of recognition, Ralit’s actions normatively associated with modern, progressive, outgoing, non-baptized youth can be read as pushing the boundaries of “fundamentalism”. This does not mean that in her isolated actions she can change the way baptized bodies might be known by other Sikhs. However, by participating in the re-signification of discourses and embodied practices deemed as “orthodox”, Ralit might be a part of ushering in changes to how baptized Sikhs are perceived by other Sikh.

Ralit: For my parents it was very surprising (that Ralit wanted to become baptized). The thing is that my parents never forced me. My parents and my brother aren’t baptized. So my parents have never forced us to become amrit-shuck (baptized) or tie a turban or anything. They were very open. They were very liberal.

Earlier in the chapter, participants commented upon baptized females as being pressured by an authority figure who decides for them what to believe and how to present their bodies. The assumption that female Sikh orthodoxy is a sign of oppression is denied by Ralit who shares that her parents and brother are not baptized. She was “never forced” to participate in baptism or “tie a turban or anything” by anyone in her family. In describing her parents as “very open” and “liberal” Ralit’s becoming-Sikh is tied to her own discursive choices and not the result of overbearing parents. In other words, it is through prevailing discourses which structure “free choice” that Ralit’s subjection and consequent performance of baptized girl can take place. The notion of a conditioned choice is alluded to in Anand’s sharing of sentiments about her orthodox identity:
Anand: My parents are more, I guess, modern than most Indian parents because my dad grew up here (Canada) and they understand. They’re always open with us so if you want to cut your hair you can. It’s not like you have to be a certain way and stay a certain way. It’s more like do whatever you want as long as you’re a good kid and just stick to your morals and your beliefs.

Anand associates her parents’ “modern” attitudes towards orthodoxy with her dad growing up in Canada. Her insinuation in associating the “west” with modernity and the “east” as something different, or pre-modern is a reiteration of discourses which has caused difficulties for many people of color (Coloma 2008; Said, 1979). Nonetheless, because of her orthodoxy, it is her body which is associated with lacking a westernized, and therefore a modern sensibility within her community. Anand uses “being born here” in relaying that her parents are “modern/liberal” and would never force her to get baptized. Her parents’ attitude is that “as long as you’re a good kid and just stick to your morals and your beliefs”, you can chose to do what you want. In a similar fashion as Ralit, Anand implies she “chose” baptism and embodying a non-normative, female baptized Sikh identity. Her choice is agentic, not as a result of being forced, but through “thinking of agency as discursive--as being the product of being inaugurated in and by discourse” (Youdell, 2006, p. 519). Later in the interview she reminds me:

Anand: I don't cut my hair, but people all throughout high school would be like oh you're not allowed to cut your hair. No actually I'm allowed to. But they (other Sikh students) are always saying (sympathetically), “that's ok, maybe you could cut it one day”, and it's like “I don't want to!”

According to Anand, to her non-baptized Sikh peers it seems preposterous that she would chose an orthodox lifestyle as a type of difference to be displayed in a modern multicultural society. Her peers even sympathize with her current state as if it is an illness, and try to encourage her that she “could cut it one day”. “It”, of course, references hair once again as the telltale signifier of religiosity for many Sikhs. Yet Anand protests, with an impassioned “I don’t want to!”, thus securing her intentions to live a life that she desires as a young Sikh female. Arguably, Anand’s actions and thoughts might play a role in forming a citational chain which could change attitudes and ideas attached to her baptized body within an intra-
group frame of recognition. Perhaps this might even result in dislodging the binary created between
baptized and non-baptized Sikhs and allow for different types of self-expression for Sikh youth.

**Proliferating Sikh Youth Identities**

Ralit: As I’ve told you before I have lived both lives. I lived as a non-amrit dhari (not baptized)
Sikh for 17 years. And based on that experience and the experience I have now, the biggest
difference is I do not feel lonely. Being a teenager, the biggest thing for you is getting attention,
having friends, and relying on someone and thinking that this person is going to stand by me
whenever I need that person. It could be your parents, it could be your friends or it could be
anyone. It could be your boyfriend. But being a non amrit-dhari (not baptized) girl you always
look for that one person that you can rely on, that you can trust on. But once you get amrit
(baptism) and you know who you are and who you belong to, that search for that one person ends
right there.

Normally the phrase living both lives or living two lives in relation to ethno-racial minorities suggests
racialized youth struggle between the culture of their parents and the cultural of the host society they live
in. To reason, it could be easy to misinterpret Ralit’s discussion of what she terms living “both lives”.
What she is referring to is the fact that for the majority of her life, she lived as a secular Sikh and it was
not until she was a senior in high school that Ralit underwent the baptismal ceremony and chose to wear
the symbols of orthodoxy. At this time, Ralit “decided” that there was a more gratifying way of living her
life. It is through baptism and living an orthodox lifestyle that Ralit feels one can achieve “freedom” and
really get to “know who you are”. Ralit views non-baptized girls as being on an endless search for
approval from others, which is the opposite to the “freedom” offered by the orthodox code of conduct. In
a similar way, Manny in an earlier comment also understands the code of conduct for baptized Sikhs as
“rules”, but that these “rules” provide some sort of freedom which results in a positive sense of
identification. Therefore, both Ralit and Manny might be placed under the regulative authority of an
orthodox code of conduct, but it is through the disciplinary apparatus of the code through which they come to understand the productive aspects of making claims to an orthodox identity. Ralit and Manny indicate the regulative and productive aspects of power in Foucauldian (1978) theorizing: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (p. 95). Thus, in performing her gendered orthodoxy, Ralit potentially re-signifies how baptized girls might be known in an intra-group frame of recognition. Even if her imperfect recitation of “baptized girl” “is not a function of an individual’s intention, but is an effect of historically sedimented linguistic conventions” (Butler, 1995, p. 134), Ralit potentially re-signifies the meanings attached to the normative understanding of baptized girls through the “freedom” she feels is provided by orthodoxy.

Peekay: Something inside me said I don’t like looking in the mirror like this anymore. I just don’t want it. I also knew you don’t have to, right. It's not a part of our religion that you have to wear a keski (not a turban, a smaller cloth cover for young Sikhs especially). It's an option if you want to…and for me it was just an image thing. So it (keski) became just another part of my body and it felt like it had to be there all the time and I couldn't go out in public without it…I was thinking about all this as outer appearance, yet I was never doing paat (prayers). I never did. I wasn't a proper Sikh. You know all of that stuff…I did everything wrong. I drank, I smoked weed and I was wearing a keski. It's so bad. It's a big contradiction. So I knew I was just wearing it because I wore it my whole life and it was just a part of my body.

In “living both lives”, Peekay goes in an opposite direction than Ralit. Peekay became a baptized Sikh in grade 2 and continued to wear her hair covered with a keski through high school. It was after graduation from high school that she transitioned out of orthodoxy and into living a secular lifestyle. What is important about Peekay’s account is that she struggled to live up to an ideal of living like a “proper Sikh” which she clearly associates with being baptized. Yet her statement offers evidence of contradictory thinking on what a “proper Sikh” might be through the comment, “I also knew, you don’t have to right. It's not a part of our religion that you have to wear a keski.” Therefore, the questions arise as to whether a
“proper Sikh” is a baptized subject who lives according to orthodox values, or is a proper Sikh a non-baptized Sikh as is indicated by Peekay’s statement that wearing religious symbols is not necessary, and “It’s an option if you want to”.

Peekay’s theorizing emphasizes the many contradictions through which participants understand baptized and non-baptized identities. Thinking with Butler, both versions of a Sikh identity are implicated in the tensions between various competing discourses in which some become temporally “normative” (Butler, 1990). Yet categories cannot contain the “excess” of the effects of discourses which usher the proliferation of categories and possibilities. Thus, even though baptized-non-baptized debates appear to “form an organising principle in peer-group relations” (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 461), there continues to be slippages and unpredictable renditions of “doing Sikh”. For example, Peekay claims a Sikh identity through her secularism, then says that she was not living up to the ideals of a “proper Sikh” (baptized code-of-conduct) because she partakes in liquor and marijuana, and she does not pray. Also, her head covering is referred to as being a part of her body from the time she was a child, but then Peekay points out that head coverings are an impotent signifier as far as being Sikh is concerned. These apparent contradictions suggest that negotiations take place through competing discourses and have material consequences for Sikh youth as they make sense of their own and other Sikh identities.

Dally: Sikhism is a second or third marker for me. I'm not as religious as my parents might be. I'm much more culturally oriented. I'm a Punjabi-Canadian now so I just feel that I'm Canadian. I have never put being a Sikh first. It's just somewhere on a list. I don't see it as essential…If you just want to say you’re Sikh, you can have a haircut and be into religion as much as someone who keeps their hair (un-cut). I don't see that distinction. I keep my hair because it is really curly and I like it. My parents were always like cut it if you want to. I have always said no.

Dally is a baptized Sikh male who does not cut the hair on his head, wears a turban, yet shaves his beard close to this face. As a baptized Sikh, he is not supposed to trim even his beard hair according to the orthodox code of conduct, but Dally is agnostic on the issue as he states “you can have a haircut and be into religion as much as someone who keeps their hair. I don't see that distinction”. He does keep his hair
under his turban un-cut but the reason he gives for not cutting it is “because it is really curly and I like it” suggesting he does not invest in the religious reasons for keeping hair cited earlier by Devyn, Manny, and Ralit despite being a baptized Sikh. In addition, Dally also feels no parental pressure to keep his hair as he claims to participate in some form of orthodoxy based on his own thinking on the matter. His decision to participate in some practices associated with orthodoxy while simultaneously engaging in behaviours that contradict the code of conduct suggests the rupturing of strict binaries between baptized and non-baptized Sikhs, while potentially opening new identity possibilities. Put differently, Dally is resisting, subverting, and re-signifying what and how youth can claim a Sikh identity through re-appropriating the strictures of the binary in unique ways (Butler, 1993, p. 224).

It is important to note that Dally’s decision to perform orthodoxy in such a manner is not without controversy and debate within the Sikh community (Gill, 2014). Many baptized Sikhs frown upon representations of a Sikh identity where the code of conduct is subverted and view it as a major insult to Khalsa Sikhs. In addition, non-baptized Sikhs such as Jasmine earlier in this chapter use examples like Dally’s to insinuate that baptized youth only act religious to present a “goody two shoes” image of piety while in actuality they are “total rebels”. It is not clear whether Dally knows or cares about these risk as he performs his identity. What is clear is that within an intra-group frame of recognition, Dally’s bodily recitations are difficult to contain within a binary and requires a different kind of theorizing.

Dally also shares that being Sikh is somewhere “on a list” hinting that contingency in identifying is important (Butler, 1995). Dally says that he sees himself as “Punjabi-Canadian” or “Canadian” and being Sikh is a “second or third” marker of identity. This suggests he puts more emphasis on Punjabi ethnicity and a Canadian identity than his parents who Dally thinks are more religiously oriented. His statements seems out of place for someone who has taken baptism as it could be assumed that religion is at the forefront of his identity as it was for Ralit and Devyn. He also answered the call for “self-identified Sikhs” to participate in this study. These contradictions messy the ease that identity categories of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender offer if taken to be pre-existing, knowable, or self-evident. Dally’s thinking about youth identities in multicultural societies suggests that he and others might not claim a static
identity, but can move through his “list” of ways to perform identities in different contexts with different people. What makes Dally’s account interesting is that unlike Peekay and Ralit’s preceding conversations about “living both lives” as an either/or proposition between an orthodox and secular life, Dally’s embodiment of “Sikh” plays out physically and psychically in-between these two poles. It is not as if Dally can transcend the moorings of identity, rather his embodiment shows “once you lift a term from its moorings, it proliferates” (Hall, in Segal, 2008, p. 385) in unpredictable ways.

Raree: I was talking about how I don't drink or smoke. But I still go out and enjoy going out. It's one of those things. Just because you have your head shaved doesn't mean you can't listen to paat (prayers) and enjoy the benefits of it. I love Sikhi (Sikhism). I really do. I think focussing on naam simran (meditating and praying on the name of God) is fundamentally beautiful. I'm going to say it, it's the best thing in my life. You can have all the wealth in life, but the best thing is simran (praying). I wake up, I have it (prayers) in my car. Peace, it channels you as a human being. Here I am growing up the majority of my life with a shaved head, and people (other Sikhs) think “hey, that guy is whitewashed”. But I'm not sitting here wearing a t-shirt saying “I do naam simran in the morning” (I do prayers in the morning)… My zone is putting on kirtan (spiritual hymns) and typing up my homework. You get into the wickedest mental space and everything just flows. Even with my job back home, typing up the cover letter or whatever they want in HR, it just flowed. It wrote itself, it really did. It was one of those things you can't explain… I was coaching basketball and talking about this one line in Japi Sahib (Sikh prayer) they talk about upay beejo, upay kao. You plant it, you eat it. I was talking to the guys at practice about the effort you are putting into practice when no one sees is so much more important than other people seeing you. It's one of those things.

In the lengthy quote above Raree, a non-baptized Sikh male, speaks to the importance of religion as “the best thing in my life”. Raree’s passion for Sikhism as an identity and practical guide for living is very evident through his repeated reference to doing prayers and abstaining from taking intoxicants. In performing his identity, he states how his beliefs and body are different from baptized Sikhs who feel they
have to wear religious signifiers on the body. For example, by referring to his shaved head (he says it twice which shows the importance of hair as a religious symbol) and facetiously stating he does not have to wear a t-shirt that says “I do naan simran in the morning” (I meditate on god’s name in the morning) to be a Sikh, he is metaphorically relating it to the idea that baptized Sikhs have to unnecessarily show-off their religious devotion through their bodies. Yet Raree is passionate about Sikhism and what it allows for him in his life. He listens to prayers in his vehicle, attends temple regularly, listens to hymns while doing homework and typing a cover letter for a human resources department, and quotes scripture while coaching basketball. In sharing with the young men he coaches “the effort you are putting into practice when no one sees is so much more important than other people seeing you”. Raree might also be making parallel links to his commitment to private devotional practices over public displays of orthodoxy.

As a non-baptized Sikh, Raree’s actions in regards to the centrality of religion in his life, his devotion to prayer, and attending temple regularly are often associated with baptized bodies. In other words, Raree’s subjection to religious discourses about living as a Sikh might be more important to him than someone such as Dally (a baptized Sikh) who sees being Sikh as a second or third maker of identity. Therefore, attempting to frame Raree as a secular Sikh would be difficult as Sikhism is absolutely integral to the way he performs his identity. He even follows many of the decrees in the rehat maryada (code of conduct) directed at orthodox Sikhs except for the issue of taking baptism and shaving his head. Therefore, Raree’s actions, as with Dally’s before, open the baptized non-baptized binary to be exposed as a by-product of discourses which are reiterated and might be re-signified within an intra-group framing of a Sikh identity.

Conclusion

In an intra-group frame of recognition, the participants in this study both establish a binary between baptized and non-baptized Sikhs, and undermine its discursive hold through their bodily practices. Meanings are claimed, reiterated, altered, disavowed, and proliferated as “cultural fantasy is not finally dissociable from the ways in which material life is organized” (Butler, 2004b, p. 214). Discourses of intra-group difference are cited, and yet bare the seeds of resistances and thus reworking the stability of
the baptized-non-baptized as an ontological fact. Instead, resignification is inevitable where the “other” is always regulated, but exceeds the ability to be captured just as the “self” constantly undoes itself by pushing the discursive boundaries of its own discovery (Butler, 2004). For example, Dally, a baptized Sikh male is partially reliant on the code of conduct in expressing his identity, however shaves his beard; Ralit, a baptized Sikh female who others assume is a “fundamentalist” makes claims to a moderate identity; Raree, a non-baptized male, lives by a code of conduct, but harshly critiques baptized Sikhs for wearing symbols of religion on their bodies; Peekay, a Sikh female, feels she just cannot live up to being a “proper” baptized Sikh so she cuts her hair and lives a secular lifestyle while claiming Sikhs do not “have to” wear symbols of religion. All of these participant examples suggest “the Other becomes constitutive of bodily formation” (Kirby, 2006, p. 146) and shadows the process of self-recognition within an intra-group frame of recognition.

The significance of regulation, embodiment, and subversion of Sikh identities is an important aspect of difference within an intra-group frame of recognition. In performing their Sikh identities, participants repeatedly highlight the importance of:

- the corporeal signifier(s) that gives shape to inner dramas and the doing in stylised performances.

Viewed in these terms the body is a fragile, unreliable and potentially porous defender of the imagined subject. But it also is the site upon which prior iterations of gender can be performed and the locus through which previous ‘doings’ can be enacted. (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 471)

As addressed throughout the chapter, intra-group differences within the multicultural imaginary take place in a wider societal milieu which has obvious effects on self-identified communities. It is not my intention to speak to intra-group differences as bounded, or disassociated from connections to other kinds of differences in multicultural societies. However, it is important to think through the ways that Sikhs making meaning of other Sikhs is implicated in how participants recognize their own and their peers’ identities. To ignore intra-group frames of recognition is to disavow a significant, yet often overlooked aspect of the process of identification within the multicultural imaginary. The contingencies involved in “asserting the place of the other in the formation of subjectivity” (Segal, 2008, p. 389) within intra-group
frames of recognition might inspire forgiveness “to others and perhaps also to oneself” (Kirby, 2006, p. 156) for needing identities to be recognized by others, but which can also create boundaries between “me” and “you”. Thus intra-group power relations are productive and limiting as they re-draw the discursive understandings of self and other within frames of recognition.
CHAPTER 6

Schooling Multiculturalism

In the preceding chapters multicultural discourses as discussed by participants were examined in establishing a “normative” multiculturalism. I have argued that normative multiculturalism is an important structuring discourse which enables recognition of ethno-racial “others” and the self. In addition, three interrelated multicultural frames of recognition (Butler, 2009) were introduced as ways of making sense of how Sikh youth negotiate their identities within what I term the multicultural imaginary. 1) Inter-group discursive differences between Sikh youth and whiteness; 2) inter-group differences between Sikh youth and racialized others; 3) and intra-group differences within the Sikh community were referenced as integral frames which affect the constitution of subjectivities and identities in multicultural societies. I argue that these interrelated frames of recognition allow for an exploration of the contingent ways identities are performatively constituted “through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized” (Butler, 2009, pp. 3-4). This is not just an epistemological issue as the continual and uneven ontological consequences which framing “others” might initiate are also significant in the way they affect participant subjectivities (Butler, 2009, p. 7). For example, in the previous chapter baptized Sikh youth discussed how they were recognized by other Sikhs as ultra-religious, backward, and lacking agency. However, participants also shared narratives in how they potentially subvert norms which solidify baptized-non-baptized binaries and open spaces of contestation and renewal. In other words, “to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable” (Butler, 2009, p. 9). As a result, I argue that frames of recognition are a factor in constructing authorial accounts about certain identities, yet slippages are inherent and may have potential in creating new grounds for self-expression and understanding.

In this chapter, the aforementioned frames of recognition are analyzed within the specific context of everyday encounters within schools and schooling practices regarding normative multiculturalism. That is, I explore how discourses of normative multiculturalism are “reproduced, reinterpreted and used
for identity work by students” (Kirkham, 2016, p. 384) in school contexts by asking how multicultural frames of recognition can be used to analyze Sikh youth interactions in school. I ask in what ways, and for what reasons, do multicultural frames of recognition emerge in everyday school encounters and with what consequences for performing Sikh youth identities? How might the injunction to perform one’s identity through normative multicultural discourses constitute the framing of non-Sikh communities and other Sikhs?

The remainder of the chapter attempts to “show how the subject is subjected to relations of power as she/he is individualized, categorized, classified, hierarchized, normalized, surveilled and provoked to self-surveillance” (Youdell, 2006, p. 518) within schools and what role normative multiculturalism has in the processes. As discussed in chapters three, four and five, one of the key enduring aspects of normative Canadian multiculturalism is the pervasiveness of colorblind discourses, its focus on consumption of food, dance and ethnic celebrations, and avoiding confronting whiteness as an underlying form of discursive power which stages the multicultural imaginary. I argue these characteristics have consequences for racialized subjects in relation to the reiterative authority of whiteness, and has consequences for how different racialized communities come to know and frame each other within schools. In the remainder of the chapter I will briefly address the question of why schools might serve as potentially useful sites for investigating the three multicultural frames of recognition outlined in this dissertation. Then I turn to data analysis in order to address how the three frames of recognition might play out in schools.

Schooling Multicultural Identities

Schools have provided researchers a context to produce a rich body of literature on student experiences and the processes affecting the construction of learner identities (Kunzman, 2006; Rasmussen, 2006, Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Youdell & Armstrong, 2011; Gordon & Zinga 2012). To this end, educational settings have also been implicated in the constitution of youth subjectivities through various multicultural discourses and encounters (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Steinberg, 2009; Little & Walker, 2012; Nagra & Peng, 2013; Heer, 2015). Multicultural encounters within the
education system are varied and can be influenced by factors including where students attend school, the curriculum being taught (or not), educational policies, who students attend school with, and which educational leaders influence students. Therefore, I agree with Ho (2011), that “public schools in particular are crucial sites for the facilitation of intercultural exchange, and indeed, may well be the most important sites for such encounters in the lives of young people” (p. 613). The experience of Sikh youth participants in this study indicates that there are many ethno-racial “others” they encounter on a daily basis in schools. I argue these “others” might be “known” through multicultural frames of recognition which draw on existing discourses of multiculturalism, ethnicity, race, religion, and gender in making sense of differences. These factors make educational settings a unique place from which to theorize how youth identities are constituted, negotiated, resisted, and open to new possibilities in understanding the relationship between Sikh youth, schools and multicultural discourses.

I am not suggesting that schools are monolithic entities which act on subjects in a universal fashion. Rather, I attempt to strike a balance between examining power relations involved in constituting multicultural identities and attending to slippages of power within the “education system”. In this way, structural determinism is avoided for a more complicated investigation of normative multicultural discursive practices circulating in schools and their material effects in “making” subjects. Schools are not to be understood as neutral institutions devoid of politics, nor can the education system fully determine student identities (Youdell & Armstrong, 2011). Instead, this chapter examines schools as spaces where multicultural frames of recognition and identities might be “realisable in different forms as young people rehearse, repeat and, occasionally, resist” (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 471) ethno-racial discourses. Therefore, in the rest of the chapter, normative multiculturalism and its influence on the many ways participants recognize the self and “others” will be examined.

**Performing Ethnonormativity**

“We are a super multicultural school, but white society just thinks we are one big brown lump. Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim are just a big brown crew. But I’m a Sikh. I’m not doing Muslim and Hindu things”

(Simran, 14 year old Sikh female).
“In school its multicultural stations. Like go check out what the brown boys are doing because they’re a big topic nowadays. Then go check out what the Asian girls are doing because they’re so good. Or what about those amrit-shuck (baptized) turban wearing girls, they’re all doing their religious thing together.

It’s all about watching and learning” (Jasmine, 16 year old Sikh female).

In the introductory chapter, these two quotes from Simran and Jasmine initiated a discussion about multiculturalism, identities, recognition, making meaning of others, and schools. I refer back to these quotes now in order underscore what has been a central theme addressed throughout the chapters of this dissertation. Namely, that ethno-racial difference clearly makes a difference in how individual participants recognize their own identities in relation to multicultural “others”. Religion, ethnicity, race, and gender are woven together by Jasmine and Simran as they speak to Muslims, white, Asian, brown boys, Hindus, and Sikhs. What Jasmine and Simran participate in is framing (Butler, 2009) “others” as static identities that can be known through “watching and learning” what they are “doing”. In comparing groups to “multicultural stations” Jasmine implies that one is able to gain a full sense of “others” as totalities by walking through her school and casually observing the behaviors of brown boys, Asian girls, and baptized Sikh girls. Similarly, Simran knows that she is different because she participates in “Sikh things”, not “Hindu and Muslim things”. These “things” are not defined, yet suggest that there are definitive “frames” around particular actions that would allow one to recognize a Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim. What is unclear is why participants desire categorization of the self and other, what societal mechanism might initiate categorization, and what the consequence might be for youth subjectivities and identities.

Aly’s (2015) concept of “ethnonormativity” (p. 31) is a useful tool through which multicultural frames of recognition deployed by Simran and Jasmine might be explored in schools. For Aly, ethnonormativity reiterates the importance of performativity in bridging discursive understandings of race, ethnicity, and religion and how these discourses are always informed by gender/sex constructs. In other words, ethnonormativity:
is a deeply embedded set of beliefs about essential sameness and difference that naturalizes the notion of ‘ethnicity’ and provides it with the status of a proper (ontological) object with which the expansive potential of self and human relationships are predicated. Ethnonormativity is relentlessly enduring; in its history it has manifested itself as that which is incommensurable about ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘religion’, ‘nation’ and ‘culture’. (Aly, 2015, p. 199)

Ethnonormativity, then, allows for an examination of the ways Jasmine and Simran recognize ethno-racial others and the discursive practices which sustain these frames (Butler, 1995). In addition, ethnonormativity informs how injunctions to perform a Sikh identity, or one’s Muslim identity, or “Asian” identity are ingrained through multicultural discourses which require racialized bodies to “give an account of oneself” (Butler, 2005). In other words, the injunction to perform one’s ethno-racial identity is an effect of multicultural discourses which allow for the expression of identities and also might restrict the way these identities may be recognized.

Aly (2015) enthusiastically takes up performativity via ethnonormativity by pursuing several of Butler’s theoretical investments in a more focussed addressing of ethno-racial identities. First, racial, ethnic, and religious identities do not emanate from a stable internal referent which then manifest in external identities. These structures of subjection are “inherently discursive and performative, being the results of” (Aly, 2015, p. 6) “repetition of acts through time” (Butler, 1990, p. 140) which produce the semblance of an organized self under ethno-racial categorization. In this way, Jasmine and Simran’s interpellation of ethno-racial “Asians, baptized Sikh girls, and Hindus” is not discounted entirely, but is mined for the underlying discourse, histories, and previous understandings which produce the “real” of identities in the present (Talburt, 2004). Second, ethno-racial subjection and the associated materialization of bodily effects and dispositions are related to other normative discourses such as heteronormativity. “Thus the pervasive forces of heteronormativity and ethnonormativity bring into being that which is named” (Aly, 2015, p. 31). Therefore, injunctions to perform Sikh male, Sikh female, and Sikh youth are constructed through “a set of gendered and racializing norms, discourses and practices which must be recited, albeit imperfectly for cultural survival and social intelligibility” (Aly, 2015, p. 31). These norms
are internalized by subjects and structure their desire for ethno-racial categorization through institutional expectations, regulation, and surveillance. Third, Aly’s account of ethnonormativity “does not entail a single, universal configuration of identification and desire” (Aly, 2015, p. 205). Instead, ethnonormativity stresses the many different “affective and material imperatives and incentives for people to behave, feel, and desire their ethnicity—in other words to conform to the racial and cultural division of society into ‘ethnic groups’” (Aly, 2015, p. 205).

Finally, Aly takes up Butler’s use of de Beauvoir by stating “one is not born Arab, one becomes Arab” (Aly, 2015, p. 199). Similarly, I take up the ways “one becomes Sikh” through multicultural discourses and the ways these discourses might constitute identities through the reiteration and negotiation of ethnonormative performances. In this approach, when Simran claims to be doing “Sikh things” she can be considered a part of a citational chain of subjects performing Sikh through repeated gestures, actions, and behaviors in continual process of meaning making which is open to re-signification in different contexts. Thus, ethnonormativity shares with performativity a faith in the inconclusiveness of identity categories, and the simultaneous hope in agency at the point of imperfect recitation of discourse.

Framing Whiteness in Schools

Manny: True we live in a multicultural country. But we live in a white culture and we go to white schools… We can't label ourselves because dominant culture labels us.

Poly: I would tell all the multicultural kids they’re running around doing their cultural thing at school, but white people will always look down on us in general…That’s because everything comes from their point of view. Yeah, so you basically have a game of which minority gets special good credit on different days at school. Just be good because all this multicultural stuff will end if you’re not. But still, look at the books and teachers. White, right? One of my teachers, and that’s coming from a white teacher, a white teacher taught me all this. He told me to always just look around and see who is in all the powerful jobs. That’s the real sign and a really good hint for how things are in society. Like judges and stuff. The rest of us are fighting for scraps in a white world… We should all unite. Black, brown, yellow and whatever and be like this is over.
In the data fragments above, Manny and Poly provide a glimpse into their thinking about schools, society and multiculturalism. One commonality that is shared by both participants is their repeated use of “white” in describing schools and the society they live in. “White” people, “white” teachers, “white” world, “white” culture, “white” school, and also “dominant culture” are all phrases used by Manny and Poly. In conjunction with the descriptor white, Poly states “everything comes from their point of view”. In clarifying “everything” Poly gives the example of individual teachers, in addition to speaking about larger systemic issue is education by reference to curriculum when he refers to “books”. Poly also echoes a point made in earlier chapters by several participants about the possible censure which looms for minorities who do not exhibit “proper”, or palatable ethnonormative performances. Although Poly himself does not elaborate on what “proper” ethno-racial performances might be, he clearly suggests some actions are tolerable and others are not. One possible outcome is outlined as Poly states “Just be good because all this multicultural stuff will end if you’re not” signifying that tolerance and accommodation inherent to normative multiculturalism might be revoked for minorities. Poly hints that the reprimand is negative in that minorities have been “tolerated” under multiculturalism, but things can be worse for Sikhs if tolerance is taken away.

Perhaps ironically, Poly partially comes to examine whiteness critically as a result of a “white teacher” who encourages him to look at ethno-racial struggles over power and authority in society. The relationship can be read in several ways. It could be that Poly understands a generalized whiteness in conjunction with individual white people who might be considered important allies to racialized communities. This is significant because whiteness does not afford individual white people the same kind of essentialized privilege (Nayak, 2007; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Or perhaps Poly cites a white authority figure in relation to knowledge about whiteness because, as with his own understanding of Sikhs, Poly might feel that the white teacher must have insider knowledge about the workings of white society. Or perhaps Poly messes with understandings that advocate one can only learn about privilege and

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41 Ishar’s phrase in an earlier chapter was “just don’t be too crazy” in referencing what might be considered above and beyond the limits of multiculturalism.
oppression through educators which “match” cultural affiliations. Even still, Poly might unwittingly be compelled to speak about the authority of the white teacher because in a “white school”, in a “white society”, a white teacher is already constructed as a bearer of correct knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Heer, 2015).

In any event, the fixation on “white” suggests that whiteness is a critical frame of recognition in apprehending Manny and Poly’s point of view of their schooling experience. Yet if teachers, books, schools and society are repeatedly recognized in relation to whiteness, how does this coincide with the way Manny and Poly speak about living in a multicultural society? The juxtaposition brings to attention that for Poly and Manny, living in a multicultural society and attending multicultural schools might mean the same thing as living in a “white” society. However, this stands in contrast against common sense understandings of normative Canadian multiculturalism outlined in chapter three, which is often used as an example of a society which has progressed through an unequal past, into a present of ethno-racial respect, tolerance, and equality. In other words, Poly and Manny hint that multiculturalism, regardless of the meanings prescribed to it, is embedded within “white culture” and attending “white” schools, the very power relations that normative multiculturalism purports to have alleviated. Yet if Poly and Manny understand “white society” and “multicultural society” as interchangeable on some level, what then becomes of the “unique” status of Canadian multiculturalism?

Manny reiterates this point as he describes the effects of whiteness by stating “we can’t label ourselves, because dominant culture labels us”. That the performances of Sikh youth, even in a multicultural society, are regulated through the authority of whiteness to name suggests that multiculturalism is a “perk” of a system for minorities which can be revoked, not something that has to continue into the future. Therefore, whiteness as a frame of recognition is significant in contextually structuring the ways these particular participants see ethnonormative classifications and hierarchies, and plays a role in how their subjectivities are constituted.

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42 See the death of multiculturalism discourses present throughout Europe, Australia and the United States (Wright, et al. 2012)
Poly also claims that Sikhs, along with other racialized subjects are “fighting for scraps in a white world”. Perhaps for Poly “fighting for scraps” denotes a struggle for resources, a call for cultural survival, or a plea for recognition that could be viewed as a unique burden for racialized bodies because the context in which the “fighting” takes place is a “white society”. Recognition in Butler’s work is “co-extensive with power, and hence relations of recognition are also seen as relations of normalisation and exclusion” (McQueen, 2015, p. 51). If Manny and Poly feel their bodies, lives, and communities are misrecognized in “dominant culture”, it could be deduced that they desire to alter “the normative conditions” (Butler, 2009, p. 4) of recognisability. Therefore the norms through which Manny and Poly feel they are interpellated, or “labelled” as Manny puts it, are inadequate for them and represent “breakdowns in the practice of recognition…and implicitly call for the institution of new norms” (Butler, 2005, p. 24).

As whiteness as a frame of recognition is normalized there is by default an exclusion, or at the very least limitations placed on how racialized subjects are understood in places such as schools. Yet where there is exclusion, there is also the possibility of resistance. In this way, not only is Poly’s identity partially constituted by and through whiteness within the multicultural imaginary, but the ability to name, or describe the regulatory power/effects of a normative whiteness becomes the site of action in challenging its authority. For Poly, agency comes in the form of his desire to “tell all the multicultural kids” at school that “We all should unite. Black, brown, yellow and whatever and be like “this is over”. The “multicultural kids” he refers to are the racialized students in his school and the “this” he refers to coming to an end could be read as the present situation where whiteness as a frame of recognition in school has become intolerable. Perhaps for Poly, the search for some type of unity with “multicultural others” may provide enough of a counterbalance to the way whiteness pervades in structuring school wide power relations.

One way to understand Poly’s call to action is to change the frame through which he feels he is recognized and to re-constituting ethno-racial subjectivities in the pursuit of making society more equitable. Yet according to Butler, (1997b), the embodiment of a performative ethno-racial identity, even in a perceived unifying endeavour, can only “be understood by reference to what is barred from
performance, what cannot and will not be performed” (p. 97). Meaning, even in Poly’s desires to foreclose whiteness by “uniting” all racialized students, whiteness is required to potentially solidify or challenge the process of subjection and “become the condition under which resignifying that interpellation becomes possible” (Butler, 1997b, p. 104). Therefore, being subjected to whiteness as a part of growing up in normative multiculturalism can be read as a critical aspect of the resistance to whiteness through the desire to “unite” and declare, “this is over”. Perhaps for Poly, the unity he seeks with other racialized students leads to a positive multicultural future where whiteness is constantly analyzed and exposed for a better, more equitable, or fairer society.

**Framing Inter-Group Racialization in School**

Jasmine: Schools are the only place you actually talk with people from other cultures. Like in the world out there you see different people all the time but they pass you by. But in school you have to play sports and do school projects in groups and stuff so you really notice what people are like. I’m around *upanay* (our people), Chinese, Lebanese, Somalian and other Indian type kids ever since I moved to this high school. I notice that everyone tries to do their cultural things a little bit at least. Like we are always stealing each other’s food and styles, and speaking each other’s language. Then you get the hard core kids who are like all dressed up in their cultural clothes and things like that everyday… I honesty used to think teachers would have meetings to force kids from different cultures to work together to be all multicultural. But nowadays you can’t avoid kids who are from all over the world. They’re all just trying to be normal.

In discussing multiculturalism and schools, Jasmine references inter-group diversity through the different racialized “others” she is in contact with on a daily basis. That she plays sports and does “projects in groups” with *upanay* (our people; Sikh), Chinese, Lebanese, Somalian and other Indian type kids” might not come as a surprise given the diverse ethnic make-up of her neighborhood. Still, these exchanges are actions which offer an opportunity to examine the way racialized youth such as Jasmine, make sense of each other’s identities through racialization as an inter-group frame of recognition. For example, one way in which Jasmine refers to performing her identity, and other racialized youth perform theirs, is by
opening to each other through “stealing each other’s food and styles and speaking each other’s language” in schools. Reiterating what Sikhs eat, how they speak, and the styles they wear, allows for other racialized youth in this particular account to recognize Jasmine’s identity as Sikh, in the same way she comes to recognize other racialized youth.

Through these everyday multicultural contexts and exchanges (Harris, 2009), youth perform “proper” multicultural identities (Voyer, 2011). By proper, I refer back to what was described in chapter three as normative multiculturalism whose hallmarks include accommodation of differences, focus on tolerance, and a respectful sharing of cultural norms. For Jasmine, there is a level of intimacy that school contexts provide which is important for performing a Sikh identity that is recognized by others, and to recognize ethno-racial performatives of other youth. This is contrasted with the “world out there” in which Jasmine feels people just “pass you by” without any significant interpersonal relationships developing. In a sense, Jasmine is sharing what might be considered evidence of the positive aspects of racialization as a frame of inter-group recognition which allows her to perform Sikh, and allows other racialized youth to perform their identities.

While Jasmine expresses that schools are places where “everyone tries to do their cultural things a little bit at least”, she also hints at certain contestations which emerge within inter-group frames of recognition by stating racialized youth are “just trying to be normal”. That Jasmine makes mention of a “normal”, a threshold, or a baseline that exists suggests that normalcy is something to be achieved by racialized youth, not a given. Because Jasmine avoids using specifics to describe what being normal for racialized youth might entail, the question arises: what is the invisible “normal” that Jasmine is speaking to and how does one achieve (or come close to) normalcy? One suggestion in addressing this question might be gleaned from the way Jasmine differentiates herself from “hard-core kids who are like all dressed up in their cultural clothes and things like that everyday”. Being “hard-core” implies a type of excess of ethnonormative performances which Jasmine relates to wearing cultural clothing or artefacts on a daily basis. The norms which govern Jasmine’s thinking might also be related to her subjection within normative multicultural discourse which structure the boundaries of ethnonormativity where racialized
bodies must perform ethnically, and also determine what is beyond the norm. For example, it might be that dressing in traditional Indian clothing on specific days such as multicultural days, Diwali, Vaisakhi, or even Halloween can be celebrated within the boundaries of normative multiculturalism. However, dressing up in cultural clothing “every day”, or whenever one feels might be what informs Jasmine’s thinking about who is “hard-core” and who is not. The excess shows the simultaneous regulation and production of ethno-racial identities through an inter-group racialized frame of recognition within schools as Jasmine makes meaning of racialized bodies that both struggle to be normal, and push the boundaries of normal to “hard-core”.

The inter-group racialized frame of recognition discussed above is also noteworthy in its surface difference between Poly and Manny’s explicit addressing of whiteness. For instance, Jasmine never mentions whiteness, which appears to be in stark contrast to the way Poly and Manny call out whiteness as a frame of recognition to describe their experiences in schools and society. Why is it that when referring to “multiculturalism”, whiteness (or white youth) is erased from Jasmine’s purview, but is essential to the way Poly and Manny understand the multicultural imaginary? What might this silence represent, reiterate, or deny? Does the lack of overtly mentioning whiteness mean that it has no bearing on racialization as a frame of recognition? The “normal” to which Jasmine speaks to provides some insight into these questions. By referring to a norm, Jasmine insinuates a form of power which polices ethno-racial subjects. Perhaps this is the same form of authority which Manny and Poly call “white”, but that which Jasmine has no concrete descriptor. The ability for whiteness to persevere through regulatory authority does not diminish because Jasmine fails to label whiteness in an inter-group racialized frame of recognition. Rather, the spectre of whiteness returns repeatedly in different forms such as Jasmine addressing the “trying to be normal” racialized youth must contend with even when they are sharing seemingly positive cultural exchanges (such as sharing food, styles, and language).
Multicultural “Daze”: Racialization, Ethnonormativity and School Performance

Anand: So like you’d see multicultural days, or student council would do multicultural week. Every day of the five days we would highlight a different culture. We would make the Indian *samosas* and sell them to make funds for the school. It was like showcasing different foods and dancing. So on a different day we would do sushi, and bannock, and these people (Japanese, Indigenous youth) would wear their cultural clothes to school. Or like one Indian Day, everyone wore (Punjabi) suits to school. It was like a multicultural week right, so people learn about your culture and other peoples’ culture and you get to open up a little bit more…But even if you say we live in a multicultural society, I feel like underneath that all, we're still going to be like “you're like this, and you're that”…So until we all verge into one race maybe...

Anand’s data fragment provides an opportunity to examine the significance of racialized students coming to recognize other racialized students during designated multicultural celebrations in schools. Multicultural day/week celebrations as discussed by Anand, are discursive practices⁴³ which highlight ethnonormative performances that allow others to “learn about your culture and other peoples’ culture”. Also, during these multicultural spectacles, Anand feels “you get to open up a little bit more” with other students through selling ethnic food (sushi, samosa, bannock), doing ethnic dances, and dressing according to ethnic tradition (Punjabi suits). In making sense of multicultural bodies and practices, she refers to three racialized student populations through her references to food: Japanese, Indian (Sikh), and Indigenous youth. Similar to Jasmine, there is no direct reference to whiteness in schools which Manny and Poly so explicitly name.

Through Anand’s theorizing of Japanese, Indian, and Indigenous youth within multicultural spectacles, she participates in framing and is also framed by other racialized subjects. Anand thinks about differences between racialized bodies as an important part of constituting “cultural difference as naturally

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⁴³ Discursive practices “entail the deployment of complex combinations of intentional and unintentional discourses and their discursive effects” (Youdell, 2006, p. 514). Therefore, multicultural day events, practices, and actions are discursive practices which “enacts or produces that which it names” (Butler, 1993, p. 13).
occurring and neutral, and race/ethnic harmony (tolerance) as following on from a recognition and celebration of these differences” (Youdell, 2006, p. 520). Ethnonormativity insists Anand perform her *Sikhness* at a specific time and date (Indian Day), and then become a spectator to consume other racialized performances on other days (Japanese Day, Indigenous Day). In other words, it is through bodily practices that “the regulative power that discursive and representational systems have in the production of its subjects, it also emphasizes the necessity for repeated stylization of the body to materialize the normative ideal” (Lei, 2003, p. 160). Therefore, racialization as an inter-group frame of recognition between and among racialized youth becomes a regulative mechanism of framing “proper” ethnic performances.

If the “subjectivating practices at multicultural day” (Youdell, 2006, p. 519) allow Anand to be more “open” about her ethnic background and affiliations, there must be situations where she might be considered to feel “less open”. She refers to these “less open” times at the end of her quote when she says that “even if you say we live in a multicultural society, I feel like underneath that all, we're still going to be like “you're like this, and you're that”. Implied is a type of restriction to ethnonormative performances which contrast with the positivity in which Anand comments on multicultural day celebrations. Anand suggests an apparent contradiction that she both enjoys reiterating an ethnonormative performance during multicultural day celebrations, but simultaneously understands that there is a negative side to being essentialized as a “this or a that” which constrains identity possibilities. Perhaps for Anand, ethnic identities cannot escape representation and must be either “this” or a “that” through ethnonormative expectations and to be recognized as intelligible subjects within multicultural context (Aly, 2015). Anand speculates on these conditions and suggest that “until we all verge into one race” there may be no alternative but to make claims to an ethnic identity. In other words, Anand ponders what positive potential a post-racial society might have on loosening ethno-racial identities as “one race” becomes the norm.

Kal: Does multiculturalism help us in places like school?

Harji: Yeah, we have a tradition in our gym. We sell *samosas* and some students sell their Spanish stuff (food items). So we have like a tradition, and you come in and you enjoy the
festival. That kind of stuff. And we play Punjabi songs and do bhangra… It’s always a good time but you get these groups of say Muslims or Chinese that don’t fully participate at times. They just stand around like a buzzkill. But our school is full of upanay so we mostly take over.

Ajay: I think people treat everyone fairly on that one day, because it’s like the mood. It’s free food right and they ask “What do you call this stuff?” They try acting so nice because they’re getting free food. Then the next day they’re like what the hell are these guys doing. The next day they come out and if the streets (around the school) are dirty (with food wrappers) and say “What the hell did these guys do? Clean it up!”

Like Anand, Harji and Ajay speak to multiculturalism in schools through the spectacle of celebration days. By this stage in Harji’s education, he has been through more than one multicultural spectacle so he uses the term “tradition” in expressing the reiterative aspect of multicultural celebrations in school. Harji shares that in his school gym, students partake in ethnic food, styles, and song which allows for people to “enjoy the festival”. Arguably, it is through the recognition of the “other” and making oneself recognizable that “enjoyment” can take place as Harji shares “we sell samosas and some students sell their Spanish stuff”. Like participants already discussed above, Harji implies that he thinks about multicultural days through a racialized frame of recognition as he mentions Spanish, Sikhs, Muslim and Chinese. Not only does Harji not name “white” or “white people” as possible multicultural subjects, Harji goes as far as to categorize Muslims and Chinese students as not fully performing on multicultural days. He is literally comparing those racialized youth who perform multiculturalism correctly with those who he recognizes as not “fully participating”, and thus falling short of ethnonormative expectations.

In this case, Harji uses the numbers of Sikhs in his school as justification for how “upanay” can “take over” the events of the day, while admonishing Muslim and Chinese students for not giving their full effort and being “buzzkills”. Harji’s labeling of deficit performatives of racialized students is an indication that in specific contexts such as multicultural celebrations in schools, racialization as a frame of recognition is used by students in regulation, surveillance, and critique of other racialized groups. Harji implies that Muslims and Chinese students do not fit in as they “stand around” while “good”
ethnonormative subjects participate by selling food, dancing, singing, and consuming what other ethnic
groups are “selling”. Harji does not question the efficacy of the actual celebration, and instead uses the
celebration to police other racialized youth. In this way, multicultural day celebrations might be read as
not only reiterating normative multiculturalism, but also serving as a source of antagonism through which
racialized youth regulate each other through inter-group frames of recognition. This is significant because
it affects the ways identities are monitored by racialized youth through subjection to normative
multicultural discourses (Harji selling *samosas*, while Muslim and Chinese are buzzkills), while also
leaving unequal power relations, the possibility of racism, and the invisibility of whiteness in staging
normative multiculturalism unchecked. In other words, Harji is not wrong to perpetuate the celebration as
he feels “it’s always a good time” and allows him to productively perform a multicultural identity in an
inter-group frame of recognition. However, normative multicultural discourses might play a factor in the
way he negatively frames and potentially misrecognizes Muslim and Chinese youth, and how Harji
performs his own identity.

Ajay, however, follows Poly’s thinking earlier in this chapter and is leery of the “mood” created
by multicultural celebration days by thinking through power relations. He describes the day after such
events as a more accurate reflection of what people really think about multiculturalism in general and
Sikhs specifically. For example, Ajay calls out an unspecified “*they*” which could be read as “white
society” or other “racialized” youth as being intolerant of ethnic diversity outside the “free food” and
smiles that school celebration days usher. Ajay feels that “*they*” are simply “acting nice”, but are waiting
for any infraction by Sikh students to reprimand them and put them in their place. Perhaps this alludes
back to normative multiculturalism’s accommodation of difference within a celebratory “mood” already
spoken to, in combination with the possibility of minority groups overstepping or exceeding the
boundaries of tolerance. The example Ajay uses is “if” there is litter left behind, Sikhs will be
admonished as he states “*they*” will say “What the hell did these guys do? Like clean it up”. Ajay is
speculating what might happen which could be based on something he has witnessed before, or
something he intuits could logically take place given his current understanding of multicultural
discourses. One way of reading his example is that after “celebrations” where subjects tolerate each other, Sikhs will be demoted in a sense or put in their rightful place. In this interpretation, the exotic food in one contexts, turns into excess which sullies the school environment outside of that specific context. In other words, maybe Ajay feels that after the spectacle, a more contentious atmosphere looms for Sikh youth.

Ajay shows that he thinks about normative multicultural celebrations in a different way than Harji. Not only does he see the celebrations and indicates he is critical of the spectacle, I argue that he employs whiteness as a frame of recognition in interrogating the motive, meanings, and future implications of normative multiculturalism for Sikhs. This means that Ajay might think about multiculturalism through power relations in a society where on a “normal” day Sikh bodies might be viewed in general as a nuisance, or at the very least slightly annoying. Also, he might be suggesting that other racialized bodies could substitute for Sikhs and cause similar levels of enmity in the future. Ajay’s caution also might constitute a part of his identity as a self-identified Sikh which arguably is partially constituted through the inter-group frame of whiteness, and the overlap of the inter-group frame of racialization. Ajay seems to use these frames in conjunction to understand how difference operates in society and how differences produces unequal effects for identity possibilities.

**Intra-Group Frame of Recognition: Sikh Youth and Schools**

Jasmine: Our school can be like little countries sometimes. Everyone mostly sticks to their own group. But like I said before we have lots of brown people. When you have so many, then you start seeing the little cliques. But seriously what am I going to do with a bunch of *freshies* in school. It’s like they have invaded all of Surrey…and I don’t like the way *amritshuck* (baptized) Sikhs look down on me for living my life like a normal person.

In a discussion about everyday circumstances in schools, Jasmine describes difference she observes in the student population by referring to them as “little countries”\(^{44}\). This references the diversity of bodies she comes across in her day to day activities in school, and how she recognizes and categorizes these bodies

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\(^{44}\) Earlier, Jasmine used the term “multicultural stations” to describe the students in her school.
together. However, she switches her focus quickly and speaks directly to differences within her self-identified community by stating, “When you have so many (Sikhs), then you start seeing the little cliques”. As a result, she mentions two specific groups, *freshies* and *amrit-shuck* Sikhs within her community which represent difference from her. *Freshies* is a term which refers to newly arrived immigrants, sometimes referred to as FOBs (fresh of the boat), and *amrit-shuck* is the word used to describe baptized Sikhs. Perhaps it is a result of being born and raised in the Lower Mainland which allows Jasmine to ask “seriously, what am I going to do with a bunch of freshies”. The statement indicates that Jasmine is at a loss when she considers what she might have in common with newly arrived Sikh immigrants who in her words “have invaded all of Surrey”. This appears to be a difference too significant to bridge for Jasmine which suggests that perhaps she has assimilated to a Canadian-Sikh identity which is too far removed from what she considers immigrant values and experiences. In addition, she perceives baptized Sikhs as looking down on her life choices as a non-baptized Sikh youth. The differences in lifestyle choices are governed by discursive understanding about baptized and non-baptized Sikhs already discussed in chapter five, yet remain significant in the way Jasmine differentiates herself from baptized Sikhs, and how they might misrecognize her.

Jasmine provides a glimpse into multicultural meaning making which is often not discussed in the literature on youth of color and identities (Jimenez et al. 2015). That is, through the example of “*freshies*” and “*amritshuck*” Sikhs, Jasmine deploys an intra-group frame of recognition in making sense of the “cliques” she identifies within the Sikh community. Relevant is that there is not just one difference in her community, but there are potentially multiple different ways to recognize difference within specific communities such as immigrant status, socio-economic background, religious proclivities, caste, or gender. The discourses which inform her definition of “cliques” are important because “cliques” can be read as a small group of non-normative Sikhs who have a distinguished set of norms and values which are counter to Jasmine’s. Therefore, Jasmine’s Sikh identity is partially constituted through positioning newer immigrants and baptized Sikhs as “others”, thus interpreting herself as the “normal” Sikh in her school.
Winner: There are these 

sardars kids (turban wearing young men) at my school and stuff. They are Babbar Khalsa (an anti-Indian government Sikh faction with worldwide membership) types who are into Khalistan (movement for an independent state for Sikhs in India). In class, one of these guy shows me his pot (marijuana) in his pencil case pouch thingy, right. In my head I’m thinking, this guy should be following Sant (Saint) Jarnail Singh (slain leader of Sikh resistance during the 1980 civil war against Indian government) and stuff, but this kid had marijuana in his little pencil pouch. What’s wrong with this kid? Then he brought mace to school. He told another (baptized) Sikh guy he wanted to fight, and that he had mace, but he got shit kicked himself. The other guy grabbed the mace out of the kids pocket and used it on him. He was another upana (our people), right, gianis fighting gianis (priests fighting priests in reference to both boys being baptized Sikhs).

Bava: This guy tore the kid’s joora (knot of hair under turban) off and his hair is like covering his face, and he decks (punches) him and everything. It’s a bad scene man.

Like many of the participants chosen for this study, Winner and Bava attend schools with a large number of other Sikh youth. In this data fragment, the participants share their account of a physical altercation between two baptized Sikh boys that took place at their school. On his way to describing the altercation, Winner, a non-baptized youth, states “There are these sardars kids (turban wearing) at my school”. In this instance he uses the term sardar synonymously with being baptized-Sikh in describing the young men who get in a fight. In addition by using the descriptor sardar, Winner attaches certain meanings to how he recognizes bodies, practices, and possible actions that baptized boys can, or should be participating in. For example, it is not clear if he simply prescribes to the theory that all baptized Sikhs are pro-Khalistani “Babbar Khalsa types”, or if he has specific knowledge about these boys’ beliefs about an independent Sikh nation. Regardless, Winner has certain expectations for baptized male bodies and one of these expectations is that marijuana not be a part of their lives along with not fighting each other.

For any student to show marijuana (contraband) to another student in school could be awkward. Yet the justification that Winner uses in this particular case is, “In my head I’m thinking, this guy should
be following Sant (Saint) Jarnail Singh”. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale 45 (a baptized Sikh) was a central figure in the resistance to Sikh genocide during the early 1980’s perpetrated by the Indira Gandhi government. He did not survive the defense of the Golden Temple in June, 1984 when the Indian Army attacked the Sikh holy shrine. Winner relates the history of Bhindranwale as a baptized Sikh leader with how he thinks his baptized Sikh peers in school should behave in regards to abstaining from taking intoxicants. Winner ends this quote with what I interpret as disappointment and perhaps shock in witnessing “gianis fighting gianis” 46 (priests fighting priests). The behavior appears to be out of bounds for Winner who considers violent behaviors (towards each other) and marijuana smoking as something baptized Sikhs males should not be doing. In this context, Winner does not use other non-Sikh students as a barometer for how he thinks Sikh students should act, behave, and perform their identities. Instead he calls attention to norms and expectation for orthodoxy he has become familiar within his imagined community in order to make sense of baptized Sikh males. Therefore, Winner’s subjection to historical discourses about baptized Sikhs can be interpreted as significant in an intra-group frame of recognition regulating orthodox male behaviors, and allowing him to perform his identity as a non-baptized Sikh.

Bava, a baptized Sikh male also involved in this interview adds to the story about the fight sharing that one boy “tore the kid’s joora (knot of hair under turban) off and his hair is like covering his face”. Bava wears a turban and reiterates the significance of hair to remain covered in public for baptized Sikhs. He understands that for a Sikh to tear the turban off of, and expose the hair of another Sikh so that it “is like covering his face” is a major taboo (Puar, 2007) 47 and “a bad scene”. The sullying of the turban is spoken about even before the physical “decking” (punching) that Bava witnesses suggesting that defiling of a baptized Sikhs hair may take precedence even over actual physical bodily harm. Bava

45 Bhindranwale is a controversial figure as many martyrs of civil wars are. Many Sikhs have pictures of Bhindranwale in their homes to pay homage to his sacrifices, while some Sikhs denounce him as a trouble maker and a terrorist.
46 Interestingly, in this interview, Bava shared that to be called gianis (priests) by other Sikhs as school aged young men was derogatory, and often limiting in terms of the behavioral connotations which Winner might be unaware of.
47 Puar (2007) details how the hair/turban of Sikhs is often targeted by hostile subjects (Indian Army, racists) in efforts to de-masculinize and de-humanize Sikh males in particular.
addresses the significance of orthodox males fighting in contrast with how he describes a situation where two non-baptized Sikh males got into a fight by stating “yeah they (non-baptized boys) scrap each other sometimes, but they are just… you know it’s just a little bit of pungay”. Pungay is word similar to mischief or trouble making as opposed to being associated with more serious transgressions that Bava sees in the “bad scene” between baptized Sikhs. In a way Bava could be read as sanctioning one violent altercation, yet being dismayed by the other. Both Winner and Bava show there is a difference in the expected male performances which are undone by the two baptized males fighting each other in school.

Winner and Bava employ an intra-group frame of recognition in how they make sense of these altercations, yet perhaps there is something more to their general disappointment with baptized boys fighting. Perhaps they both feel that baptized Sikhs must live up to a higher standard than non-baptized Sikhs because in some ways they are more visible, stand-out, or garner more attention within normative multicultural society through their hair, beards, turbans, and kirpans. Perhaps increased visibility leads to increased scrutiny which could also negatively impact the larger Sikh community. If this reading is taken up, orthodox youth might be placed under surveillance to a greater degree within an intra-group context as a result of being more visible in dominant society. In this case, the audience for transgressions are obviously other Sikhs, but also suggest that inter-group white and racialized others might become aware of transgressions in a wider normative multicultural, or white society. It might be the case that non-baptized boys fighting and smoking marijuana is considered mischievous because they are more relatable to a norms in aesthetics of masculinity, and therefore their actions cause less of a concern than when orthodox males participate in the same activities. Thus a hierarchy might be presented within an intra-group frame of recognition that might also be related to the norms within a white frame of recognition.

**Intra-group Educators and Sikh Youth**

Kal: Does it matter if teachers or principals are Sikh to you?

Mole: We had a brown vice principal this past year. You know how brown people are conservative and old school even though she was born and raised here. Then, the summer shorts come out for girls and she (vice-principal) banned all shorts for girls. We couldn't wear tank tops
that would show the side of our under garments and we couldn't wear any shirts, and boys
couldn't either, with offensive language. Everyone at school was kind of like really pissed off,
because it was geared more towards girls and that's sexist. All the brown students were like it's
because the vice-principal was brown, and brown people don't like us wearing that stuff. It's like
we are dressing white and showing too much skin and in our culture we don't do that.

In my discussion with Mole, I ask a question about Sikh student perceptions of having educational leaders
with similar cultural backgrounds as them and what these relations might produce. Mole’s data fragment
addresses how she perceives a vice principal in the school she attends by relaying her rendition of the
genesis of a school wide dress code. By stating, “You know how brown people are conservative and old
school” she is assuming that there is some common understanding, or intra-group knowledge about older
“brown” females we might share. The assumption of the vice principal’s conservatism “even though she
was born and raised here” may be related to several different factors. The age difference between Mole
and the administrator, the power difference between student and administrator, and the ethnonormative
assumptions about tastes in dressing for Sikh women may all be related. Regardless, Mole thinks the
administrator “banned all shorts for girls” and “we couldn't wear tank tops that would show the side of
our under garments and we couldn't wear any shirts, and boys couldn't either, with offensive language”.
Mole’s surety of the administrator’s intent is justified through the statement, “All the brown students were
like it’s because the vice-principal was brown, and brown people don't like us wearing that stuff”. She
underscores that insider knowledge Sikh students might perceive they have about their community leads
them to “rightly” recognize just where the dress code came from and the reasons for it.

Through the dress code policy and disciplining students, Mole positions the administrator as
reiterating and enforcing an overly conservative position on student attire. Put differently, Mole is making
sense of the administrator’s actions and behaviors based on her own investment in prior knowledge which
helps her frame the principal. In regards to the dress code, it would appear that an intra-group frame of
recognition is being utilized where discourses about Sikhs as understood by other Sikhs takes temporary
primacy in a multicultural school. The matter seems straightforward and devoid of the influence of
whiteness, but then towards the end of the quote Mole says, “we are dressing white and showing too much skin and in our culture we don't do that”. In essentializing both communities in terms of normative behaviors, Mole participates in inter and intra group framing. The importance of this kind of theorizing is that both frames of recognition require being negotiated simultaneously because they operate to inform each other. In other words, they cannot be extrapolated from each other as to “dress white” requires a “not dressing white” which is referred to through the perceived actions and desires of the vice-principal. The norm of a “white way” of dressing for Mole suggest that even within her intra-group differentiating from the “old school”, vice principal there is still a white standard to be contested with. As a result, intra-group frames of recognition are not simply devoid of the discursive authority of whiteness in multicultural societies. In many cases they are embedded within each other in the way students theorize their identities.

Nav: I had a Punjabi sub (substitute teacher) and I swear she didn't know proper English.

Everyone started laughing at her, like what is she saying hahaha. She had an accent and she’s pronouncing the white names like, in a dipper way. Just like the funniest things ever, and we were all like oh my god. And our names (Sikh students) were said the dippiest.

In discussing the consequences of having a teacher from a shared cultural background, Nav speaks to an incident involving a Sikh substitute teacher in one of her classes. In sharing her encounter, Nav differentiates herself from the teacher by calling her a “dipper”. The common usage of this word by Sikhs is to describe new immigrants, backward, or overly traditional Sikhs. The reason Nav gives for calling the substitute teacher a dipper is that “she didn't know proper English” which is evidenced by the teacher’s Punjabi accent being the “the funniest thing ever”. From this perspective, the accent itself is what prompts Nav to claim the teacher did not speak “proper” English, and not any verbal or grammatical errors. In this specific case, the Punjabi accent is scrutinized which begs the question if other accents would be met with an equally negative response. For example, would a teacher’s British accent, French accent, Spanish accent, or Chinese accent solicit “oh my god” as a response, or might certain accents be understood as a type of performative act more befitting a school context.
It is not clear if Nav would hold the same views if the accent was heard coming from other students, the support staff, or the custodian yet somehow the accent foregrounds the recognition of differences between a “non-dippers” (Nav), from the “dipper” teacher in school. Nav’s constituting of the teacher as a “dipper” through her accent also gives Nav a potential foundation through which she can convey her own identity. However to establish a foundation of her identity also opens a path to considering what “foundations authorizes, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses” (Butler, 1995, p. 7). Nav could be foreclosing the teacher’s accent as something which is outside of the norm when coming from an educator. If this is the case, Nav’s mocking of the teacher establishes that Nav is the normative Sikh in reiterating the non-accented norms within education, not the accented teacher (Kohli, 2012). The accent might also be associated with the teacher’s immigration status or family background which opens space for Nav to police the boundaries of acceptable “brown” behaviors in school. Therefore, the Punjabi accent might be the “the funniest thing ever” to Nav because it is disassociated from the languages, voices, and accents which are “normally” connected with knowledge, or authority, or leadership traditionally associated with the teaching profession (Heer, 2015).

If the context of schools is important in where and from whom the accents emanates, then intra-group framing alone might be inadequate in analysis. By this I mean that pronouncing white names like a “dipper” and having the Punjabi names being pronounced as the “dippiest”, suggest whiteness as a frame of recognition may simultaneously be operationalized in policing the norms of multiculturalism. As Lippi-Green (1997) relates, it is “accents linked to skin that isn’t white, or which signals a third world homeland, that evokes such negative reactions” (p. 239). If this is the case, the accent may subtly inform who belongs to the nation and which bodies “struggle to fit in with the dominant school culture” (Kayaalp, 2015, p. 137). In this way, “accent discrimination” (Derwing, 2003) perpetuates racial and ethnic inequalities, but remains unaddressed within normative multicultural discourses silence on the authority of whiteness to dictate norms. Taken in this vein, at the same time Nav is compelled to differentiate herself within an intra-group frame of recognition, the subtly of whiteness continues to
influence by regulating and disciplining the norms around accents and racialized bodies which become entrenched within schools.

**Conclusion: Multicultural Frames of Recognition and Schools**

As multicultural frames of recognition are used to make sense of identities within schools, the pressures to perform ethnonormatively are negotiated by youth (Aly, 2015). The discourses which constitute “knowing” multicultural “others” therefore dictates understanding which “others” are performing the right way, and which subjects are not in school contexts. These negotiations are both productive in the constitution of ethnonormative performances which many participants enjoy and take pride in, and restrictive in that the injunctions to perform one’s ethnicity are often rife with assumptions, essentializations, and surveillance of others. For example, Jasmine and Harji express that multicultural day celebrations are places where they get to showcase parts of their Sikh heritage through bodily performances which reiterate what Sikhs eat, how they dance, the clothes they might wear, and the music they listen to. They learn not only to recognize other cultures (Japanese, Spanish, Indigenous, etc.), but also desire recognition through important inter-cultural exchanges within schools. However, participants also express the problem of essentializing ethnonormative identities by placing expectations on racialized “others”, and those “others” within the Sikh community. These expectation also have regulative effects as expressed in the policing of Muslim and Chinese students as being multicultural “buzzkills”, or insulting a Sikh teacher because her Punjabi accent is out of place when contrasted with normative expectations for teachers. Here, the costs of performing identities in certain ways bring with it negative consequences and censure which act to reassert norms associated with youth identities.

As the Sikh participants discussed in this chapter have shown, multicultural frames of recognition are influential in the ways they analyze ethnonormative expectations, behaviors, and actions in schools. What becomes evident in student narratives is that inter-group differences between Sikhs and whiteness, Sikhs and racialized youth, and intra-group difference within the Sikh community are deployed contextually by youth in the process of identification. However, it is not easy to separate these frames of inquiry as they often influence each other. For example, in this chapter participants have shared the ways
they think about racialized youth at multicultural day celebrations in relation to acting “normal” within a “white” society. In addition, the fact participants expressed that intra-group discursive differences within the Sikh community might also be influenced by discursive authority of whiteness through regulating how students dress, speak, and behave points to the importance of thinking through the aforementioned frames of recognition both individually, and in their co-constitutive relationship.

As youth reiterate ethnonormative performances through frames of recognition, they also continually challenge the discourses which make identities appear to be real. For instance, participants such as Ajay and Manny posed challenges to the authority of whiteness by calling out the dominance, authority, superiority, and legitimacy of white power in schools (Castagno, 2014; Leonardo, 2009; Mathias, 2016; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Participant narratives about multicultural days specifically provide opportunities to question the status quo, point out unequal power relations, and highlight the hypocrisies of whiteness as an inter-group frame of recognition. These challenges might broaden ethnonormative expectations within multiculturalism and open possibilities to perform identities differently. Similarly, pushing multiculturalism’s purview to challenge intra-group discourses which limit the ways youth come to know each other is also important in schools and neighborhoods where significant numbers of Sikhs attend school. That is, these intra-group contexts appear to also inform the subjectivities and identities of the participants yet are often not made sense of under traditional multicultural paradigms. Therefore, requiring multiculturalism to interrogate the frames of recognition addressed within this chapter may allow for a new type of multiculturalism to flourish and embrace more positive relations between and within self-identified communities.
CHAPTER 7
“Sikhing” Difference

This dissertation began with an inquiry into how the recognition of differences might be approached in the context of Canadian multiculturalism and how differences might affect Sikh youth subjectivities and identities. This has not been an easy task given the theoretical perspective undertaken to elucidate these matters within this study. That is because relying on theoretical frameworks that are influenced by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler do not allow for permanent definitions, relying on truth claims, or to accept modernist assumptions about identities as preceding practices. Humanist understandings of identity, experience, agency, and voice are troubled in order for theories that deconstruct the foundations of these terms in producing different alternatives in research (St. Pierre, 2000; Pitt & Britzman 2006; Lather, 2009; Youdell and Armstrong, 2011). Moreover, the participants cited in this project do not unanimously agree on definitions of concepts such as multiculturalism and terms of identity such as Sikh. Therefore, nowhere in this dissertation do I attempt to define a singular Sikh identity, voice, or experience, nor do I claim one predictable effect of multicultural discourses. I am more interested in participants’ subjection to/by discourses and how they reiterate, negotiate, and subvert them in relation to making sense of “others” and themselves in everyday interactions within the contested space of the multicultural imaginary.

Part of my reasons for pursuing this line of inquiry is related to my own experience and history with labels, categorizations, and grouping of people under particular banners such as Sikh, Indo-Canadian, South Asian, and East Indian. That is because for most of my life I have had these categories available for me to self-identify with, and also been aware that others categorize me even without my consent. I am not innocent in this matter as I too use various labels through which I make sense of the differences around me. Similarly, in my twenty years as an educator in both the high school and university systems in British Columbia, I have noticed a vast diversity among young people who self-identify as Sikh, and am aware of some of the ways Sikh youth define others. One issue stands out for me and that is the excess, the overflow, and the lack of containment these groupings actually provide the
multiple bodies making claims to the same sign. From high school classrooms, university lecture halls, counselling offices, and Sikh temples different perspectives about what a Sikh is, how being Sikh might materialize, and what is possible for Sikhs to become provides insights into competing renditions of identification. Of particular importance in regards to this study are the ways recognition is informed, regulated, disciplined, and resisted in order for claims to identities to emerge within the context of the Lower Mainland.

The theoretical constructs I choose to structure the dissertation are not simply read off a menu of ideas and selected. My own history and experiences with people and ideas which I have been exposed to are themselves a by-product of the discourses I have been influenced by. For example, I much rather speak about the ways youth are “doing” their identities in order to make claims of “being” Sikh, rather than starting from the point of “being” a Sikh and researching what Sikhs are “doing”. This decision is not of my free will, but implicates my own regulation and productive possibilities as a researcher who attempts to move beyond identity foundations while recognizing the sense of “realness” of foundations in the way participants’ identify, and identify others (Talburt, 2004).

As explained in chapter two, the evolution of this dissertation is a result of being “stuck” and “getting lost” (Lather, 1998; Lather, 2007) with theories that I felt could not adequately address the data as I saw it. Whether this has to do with my own analytic shortcomings, or shortcomings of theory, these moments of resistance and rupture are spaces of tension and also exhilaration as possibilities surface for something new to emerge. It is within these moments that decisions are made during the research process in regards to what is possible that previously was impossible, and what was previously difficult to grasp becomes the temporary moorings of an entire dissertation. In this final chapter, I will comment on the research approach, what I feel is the overall significance of the project, the strengths, limitations, and applications of the dissertation, and potential future directions the project might be extended toward.
Researching, Researcher, and Researched

Through this dissertation I have sought to bring into conversation performativity theory of identities, and multicultural theory. My intent was not to give a survey of multicultural theories *per se*, but have discussions with youth about everyday situations and contexts (Harris, 2009; Wise & Velayutham, 2010) through which they perform identities. Therefore, categorizing specific typologies of multiculturalism in traditional multicultural education is forgone in order to focus on how youth perform identities through their subjection to discourses of multiculturalism. Everyday multiculturalism or “how individuals routinely negotiate across cultural difference in everyday encounters” (Ho, 2011, p. 604) in places such as schools does concern itself with how youth are “doing multiculturalism”. The spaces and places of cultural exchange where youth are required to make sense of others and offer a rendition of themselves to be knowable are central to this study. However, to my knowledge, literature on everyday multiculturalism with a sustained focus on the ways subjectivities and identities might be taken up as performatively constituted through the work of Judith Butler is a new contribution to the field. Giving explicit attention to the ways discourses about multiculturalism regulate and produce youth identities through normative practices reiterated throughout society is deemed a possible future direction for youth studies. In addition, performativity theory has long been associated with gender and sexuality, whereas multicultural theory has traditionally been used to analyze race, ethnicity, and more recently religion (Bell, 1999; Banks, 2009). Along with theorist such as Lei (2003) and Aly (2015), I attempt to bridge these bodies of literature because as I have argued throughout the dissertation, gender and constructions of race, ethnicity, and religion are inseparable (Bannerji, 2000; Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Abdel-Shehid & Kalman-Lamb, 2015). We can surely ignore any of these constructs in research, however, as participants have evidenced, these discourse always interact with each other in constituting identities.

Many studies in this dissertation have been cited in reference to youth of color, including Sikh youth, and how they are racialized within multicultural societies. Issue of immigration, assimilation, and religious accommodations have been explored in relation to how racialized subjects think about living in Western nations. However, this dissertation’s focuses on multicultural discourses specifically and how
these discourses are implicated in the constitution of ethno-racial and gendered identities moves beyond just analyzing student opinions about multiculturalism. Rather the argument I put forward is that multiculturalism has become such a normative discourse for Canadian Sikh youth that they use it as what Thomas (2011) refers to as a “placeholder” (p. 31) to refer to living among diversity. As a significant, normative “placeholder”, it becomes possible to analyze multiculturalism through its reiteration by individuals, schools, and governments and its effects on how youth identify, and identify others.

An original contribution of this study is theorizing multicultural frames of recognition in the ways they facilitate recognition between the self and multiple others within what I term the multicultural imaginary. As individuals are not static entities, neither are traditional representations of others in society. This means that Sikh youth do not simply gauge their identities against white bodies in a fictive binary. Instead, through framing whiteness, racialized others, and other Sikhs, I argue that the “other” is more complicated than simply “white people”. I do not deny the discursive authority of whiteness within multicultural frames of recognition, however, there are bodies of color and other Sikhs which are made meaning of in everyday situations. Therefore, contingency is significant in opening and foreclosing who the other is, through what discourses the other is recognized, and what consequences for Sikh identities. Many of the participants in this dissertation live and attend school with a large amount of other Sikhs. These intra-group contexts are not devoid of inter-group frames of recognition, yet there has to be some recognition in the way topics such as the baptized or non-baptized debate, or caste might have a meaning and history including, and beyond contemporary whiteness. For example, participants show they interpret Sikh history evolving from the late 15th century in thinking about their identities as baptized and non-baptized youth in the contemporary Lower Mainland. This type of complexity pushes the contours of the recognition of difference, how difference is discursively informed, and the material effects of discourses of difference on youth.

As a person of color, and someone who has identified as Sikh, I have both relied on racialized identifications and also lamented their imposition. This is not just a tension, but is sometimes a burden as expressed by Arman in this study who feels “sad” that he has to represent all Sikhs all the time. On the
one hand, I do not wish to undermine those who find refuge under the sign Sikh and use it towards a
critical politics that changes the material conditions of Sikh lives. On the other hand, I advocate for a
politics of deconstruction in an attempt to unsettle the discourses and power relations which limit identity
possibilities. Therefore, I take no Sikh identity as a given, but instead pursue the “discursive and material
injunctions” (Aly, 2015, p. 199) to perform one’s ethno-racial identity as the primary driver for
subjecthood. This is not a position I relish. I am aware that serious debates within the Sikh community
over identities and the proper way to perform an authentic Sikh identity have caused friction for longer
than I have been exploring these issues. I have participated in these debates in various contexts and
understand the commitment and passion of people on all sides. However, the theoretical framework of
this dissertation is not an erasure of identity politics or strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1998) rather an
extension of discourses which compel identification in such sure terms. If these sureties can be critiqued,
perhaps the potential for different forms of identity might be able to take hold over time and space.

Teaching and Schools

In my own teaching career in high school I was once asked by a group of Sikh girls if they could
do a special bhangra dance at an assembly. I was happy to be their intermediary with administration
which greeted me with great enthusiasm. While the girls danced I watched the audience filled with
students smiling, some standing, some imitating bhangra style moves, and others clapping along to the
beat. Not only were the girls elated that they could show the school population their dance, I was very
proud of them and my administration for being so supportive. The experience was rewarding and gave me
an ego boost as I felt a sense of connection with “my people” being represented so well by these
wonderful dancing girls, but then the beats stopped...

Throughout the dissertation and especially chapter six, schools have been the most discussed
place in which frames of recognition play out. Therefore, perhaps the potential of this dissertation lies in
ways it could inform educators and educational leader about multiculturalism and Sikh youth. A point of
inquiry for educational leaders is what do about normative multiculturalism’s focus on celebration,
colorblindness, consumption of others, and accommodation. Is it a good thing? Is it superficial? Is it
enough for now while we think about new ways of understanding multiculturalism? Should we move on from multiculturalism and how? Or do we need to discuss issues of inequality, racism, and the authority of whiteness in society as a part of multiculturalism? The answer depends on one’s reading of multiculturalism, one’s expectations, and one’s subjection to discourses about multiculturalism. If I listen to the participants in this study, the answer to whether we should get rid of the celebratory focus is a resounding no. Participants felt that these intercultural exchanges were informative, and built a sense of self-esteem, if momentarily. Even those who critiqued multiculturalism as reiterating the authority of whiteness and impotent in addressing racism, did not want to move on from celebrations. This could be because these participants are so influenced by normative multicultural discourses that they cannot easily conceive multiculturalism without public spectacles. Or perhaps these youth should be given credit for being able to synthesize more than one version of multiculturalism at the same time. Regardless, educators have the potential to engage with multicultural practices in ways that might allow for critique of power relations, racialization, and whiteness to problematize the norm. They also might purposefully, or unconsciously, reiterate an uncritical multiculturalism yet feel that they have accomplished some very important anti-racist initiative. Or they might not care. Either way, this study offers educational leaders fodder for thinking about the norm of multiculturalism in their school districts and what to do about it.

In this dissertation I have discussed multiple beliefs, family circumstances, religious practices, bodily representations, gender identities, and different understandings of society by Sikh youth. Through the diversity of representations which fill the preceding pages, I appeal to educational leaders to think about these students in their classrooms, hallways, and sports fields beyond essentialized identities. As cited in this dissertation, Sikh males in particular currently occupy an infamous position within the Lower Mainland due to violence associated with criminal intent. This is a serious issue that various Sikh communities are trying to grasp at the same time as these incidents are being grappled with by the public at large. Sikh females complained that their bodies are read as quietly suffering under some form of gender and religious oppression. There are certainly examples of oppression in Sikh communities, but Sikh females also speak about freedom, choice, and supportive parents. The participants in this
dissertation discuss the way others recognize them and speculate on reasons such as racism, lack of education about Sikhs, and patriarchy. The participants are also just as eager to discuss volunteer work, praying, traveling, understanding other faiths, and playing sports. They exhibit as much diversity as any other socially constituted group, and this needs to be reflected in the ways teachers speak about and with Sikh youth.

Related to this point, the participants in this study perform Sikh from various positionalities. For some being Sikh is a religious signifier, for others it is interchangeable with a Punjabi ethnicity, for others like Dally, being Sikh is “somewhere on a list” of possible way he chooses to identify. The fluidity of identities is related to subjection to discourses and should cause pause in thinking about Sikhs in one way as they move between race (skin color), ethnicity, religion, and gendered selves. Although the messiness of identities sounds daunting, perhaps if we think of inclusivity, not-knowing, and the impossibility of the “truth” of a singular identity, educators might be provided a platform to focus on how Sikh youth identities are constituted, through which discourses, and through what types of resistances.

**Thinking Beyond These Pages**

A further contribution of this dissertation to the literature on youth of color is to think beyond discourses about racialized youth being torn between two cultures. Suggested in this model is that whatever culture the racialized youth are from, there is a degree of incommensurability with a host, or dominant society. The home cultures of these youth are deemed to have too many conflicting values, norms, and practices with the host society which causes constant tension and strife. This form of essentialization is countered by the participants in this study. These are second and third generation Sikh youth who have multiple affiliations contingent upon context and the people they are with. In many respects they have more of a connection with a “Canadian culture” then some mythical culture from a faraway land. In this context, they cite discourses which are relevant to them about gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, and nation while also resisting in different ways. This is what allows baptized Sikh youth to be inventive in how they wear turbans according to hip hop styles and Rasta fashions while claiming an orthodox identity. This is what compels some Sikh youth to show their ethno-racial affiliations through
tattoos on their bodies. This is what allows for Sikh youth to travel to India where they are recognized, as Mole puts it, “whitewashed”. These are not two monolithic cultures clashing, but a “battle” of a different kind. This is the battle of contested discourses crashing against the “normative horizon” (Butler, 2005, p. 24) which “governs the scene of recognition” (Butler, 2005, p. 25) for Sikh youth.

Although considerable amounts of time and effort were put into this research study, there are shortcomings which need to be addressed. First, as discussed in chapter two, conducting interviews involves a topic to be identified, a call for participants, making choices about questions, where interviews will take place, who will be permitted in these interviews, what counts as data, and data analysis. All of these factors implicate the ways researchers are always “in” their own projects from beginning to end. This is not purely a negative aspect of being reflexive, rather it shows the limitations of research dedicated to participant narratives which cannot avoid the specter of the researcher (Lather, 2009). The study was also conducted in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver where certain types of knowledge about Sikhs has developed differently than elsewhere. Although it was not my intent, I may have inadvertently used language which reifies the experiences of Sikh youth in Vancouver, with those across Canada, the United States, or India. This is to suggest that in writing the dissertation, there are inevitable slippages in language which falsely convey a sense that replication is possible which is not intended and completely false. Also, as a researcher who was recognized as sharing some form of identification by participants, I am left to speculate what influence this had on data collection, who was willing to be interviewed, and those potential participants who would rather not speak to me. Although these questions cannot be answered, they suggest the inadequacies of attempts to find truth in data. Furthermore, I had been introduced briefly to some of the participants’ parents at cultural events which might have helped the recruitment process, and also changed the ways topics were discussed.

Admittedly, this study took a trajectory that was different than intended at the outset. By this I mean that I had not intended on writing a dissertation about discourses of multiculturalism and the shaping of youth subjectivities and identities. Rather, I was interested in how social institutions such as schools effect the gender identities of Sikh youth, and how Sikh youth experience the education system.
Indeed multiple drafts of the chapters that make up this dissertation only mentioned multiculturalism as a generalized descriptor of a type of society where cultural diversity was clearly evident. Yet through continuous passes of data transcripts, I finally came to the realization that participants spoke about multiculturalism in different ways and with regularity whether I initiated the conversation or not. In this way, multiculturalism might be considered to be ignored by me, until such a time where it was interpreted to be significant in the way Sikh youth understood themselves and others. Yet what might this ignoring signify? What could I not see initially that I later found intriguing about multiculturalism within the dissertation? Was it possible that I avoided the topic unconsciously? If so why?

Perhaps multiculturalism served to interrupt my desire to write a dissertation specifically about Sikh youth and gender. Or perhaps multiculturalism was always there, yet I could not find the theoretical tools to invest in merging multiculturalism with possibilities and implications for gender subjectification. This could be due to my intense reading of performativity theory at the time where multicultural theory rarely makes an appearance. Conversely, in multicultural theory, performativity theory was certainly non-normative. The comfort in thinking I knew where theories stand and which theories should be used in relation to which topics may have contributed to avoiding the discomfort of attempting to try and reconcile the possibilities of multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender being put into conversation (Pitt & Britzman, 2006). In other words, “What gets told and remembered therefore, is as important as what gets silenced and forgotten” (Janzen, 2011, p. 151) in the research process. If multiculturalism remained silent, then the project would look considerably different. My speculation is related to conducting research where linearity proves difficult, if not forced. In my case, the entire process has been cursed and blessed with no concrete beginnings, middle, and endings; instead just eruptions of theory, data, messiness, discourse, writing, knowledge, normativity, and resignification. Regardless, the implications for conducting a research project where resistance to knowledge and what is silent has as much of an impact as that which is repeatedly highlighted as valued theory underscores the impossibility of authenticity in research.
Recommendations for Research

This dissertation addresses how Sikh youth in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver make sense of their identities in relation to living in a multicultural society. A part of participants’ understanding of themselves has to do with localized discourses about the Sikh community. Often, participants feel they are being “framed” in a negative way in schools and society which plays a part in how Sikh youth feel they belong to multicultural Canada. Participants expressed being portrayed as gangsters, religious fanatics, and oppressed within their cultures which has some effect on their subjectivities and identities. Further research needs to explore why these youth feel this way, including the voices of teachers, administration, and school support staff. I did not interview non-Sikh students, parents, and school stakeholders which is an omission worthy of address and might assist in unearthing the discourses which cause some participants to feel they are the perpetual “other” in the Lower Mainland.

Further to this point, as indicated throughout the project, intra-group and inter-group dynamics between racialized communities need to be studied with as much vigor as what is defined as traditional racism. These participants attend schools and live among such a wide array of ethno-racial differences that ignoring this issue fails to account for the complex power dynamics through which youth understand their own identities and others’. This does not mean anti-racist work is abandoned; it means that discrimination takes on many forms, is contingent, affects the day to day interactions and material conditions of youth, and should be researched in its complexity. For example, in this study caste differences as discrimination influenced who Sikh participants would date, associate with, insult, and how they would constitute their own identities. Participants referred to various Muslim rulers’ attempts at eradicating Sikhs from as far back as the 1500s and how it influences the present of their understanding. Social justice and anti-oppressive work could account for intra-group difference and the way racialized groups essentialize each other not to ignore whiteness, but to try and understand marginalization in its overlap and specificity. In addition I have focused on race, ethnicity, religion, and gender throughout the dissertation. However, I speak very little to class identifications and socio-economic backgrounds of the youth in this study. This is not just a limitation of the study, but a point of important further research on
how identities might take shape in the multicultural imaginary. Immigration status, colonization, transnational Sikhs who work or attend school in different countries, and online identifications through social media might also provide informative opportunities to continue researching Sikh identities and multicultural discourses.

How normative multiculturalism is reiterated in everyday cultural exchanges needs to be interrogated if pushing the boundaries of criticality are desired. That means researchers need to look at both macro policy, and the micro levels of day to day interactions among diverse sets of people if whiteness is to be exposed as integral to multiculturalism as defined by participants. Here the work of Foucault is instructive in situating governmental policy and the way individuals subtly and not so subtly police each other through multiculturalism (Gozdeck, Ercan & Kmak 2014). Schools play an important role in this dynamic. Therefore, the discourses which sustain school policies on multiculturalism/diversity without situating power and privilege might be researched for possible links to student subjectivities and identities.

Researchers might also be assisted by thinking across paradigms of inquiry in which racialized bodies can be known and represented, and the impossibility of knowing these bodies. I refer to the work of performativity theory within multiculturalism as having potential in situating the relentless pull of normalizing discourses in all aspects of life which foreground identities. Is there a singular Sikh female identity? Is there a singular Sikh male identity? For most researchers, the quick answer is probably no. However, the theories invested in may be epistemologically staging a knowable identity referent. Here I submit that researchers need not think of either or propositions. We can acknowledge the wonderful, beautiful, creative, and productive ramifications of identity politics while continuing to trouble our complicities in reiterating norms. Hopefully, our blind spots might be made evident in continually working through the “fixed position from which to speak” (Wright, 2003, p. 206). This might produce research which attends to the recursive nature of power in situating racialized bodies such as the Sikh youth in this study across contexts like the Lower Mainland, California, the UK, and India.
Finally, in a similar vein to the frames of recognition, which have been described throughout this dissertation, I have become aware of some of the ways that I have been framed, and how I frame others during the research process. Apparently something about me, my body, my interests, my theoretical leanings, and my research means something to other people. For example, I have been asked by more experienced academics if as a body of color, my research is “dangerous” because I do not take up identities as “real”. I have been asked why I rely so much on Judith Butler when speaking about Sikh youth as if it is incommensurable. I have been asked if I know that I have been colonized by master discourses of “white” poststructural theories. I have been asked by self-identified Sikhs as to why I do not “take a side” on issues of what is a proper Sikh identity. All of these questions and conjecture are both productive and restricting in that they made the research possible and also led to a type of paralysis in my theorizing and writing. As a novice researcher and Ph.D. student working on fulfilling the requirements of a dissertation, I feel the pull of responsibility to others and also have my responsibilities framed for me by others. This point is made in order to advocate for exploring the lives of Sikh youth in multiple ways which surely will have multiple political repercussions. Yet as I arrive at a moment which signals this research project is coming to a stage of tentative completion, I also ask other researchers to pay attention to the way they frame and recognize each other, through what mechanisms of regulation, and what costs to the self and others. In this endeavor, perhaps new paths in researching Sikh youth will continually emerge and continue to inform new understandings.
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